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INDEPENDENT NEWS & VIEWS

March 3, 2003

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from Buenos Aires

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Dispatches from the
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Anti-War Movement
Gains Momentum

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Editorial

Stopping the Drive to War

Opposition to war against Iraq has grown steadily in recent weeks, both at home and abroad. The January 18 demonstrations in Washington and San Francisco attracted hundreds of thousands of people, more than even the biggest anti-Vietnam War marches in the '60s. The polls show that more than two-thirds of Americans oppose the Bush administration's plans to unilaterally attack Iraq.

Still, the media all but ignore the unprecedented activity against the war. In Chicago, for example, the City Council passed a resolution opposing unilateral action by the United States by a vote of 46 to 1. Something like this was inconceivable in the '60s, yet the *Chicago Tribune* buried this news in a paragraph hidden in a more general story, and the *New York Times* gave it three inches in a column of short items. Since then, the number of city councils that have passed similar resolutions has risen to 50 (with Cleveland being the most recent at this writing). This is truly amazing, yet it has produced not even a ripple on the pages of the country's leading newspapers.

Not surprisingly, the media have preferred to play up the in-fighting among a small number of former student protesters who are appalled by the fact that a few sectarian groups have been the most active organizers of the big marches in recent months. Yes, it is unfortunate that speakers at some of the big demonstrations often talk about matters not directly related to the Bush administration's plans and rationale for war.

Intelligent organizers against the war would stick to the point in order to gain maximum support. But the more important point is that the hundreds of thousands of people who attend these protests totally ignore the sectarian distractions. Meanwhile, the carpers, instead of being thankful for the dedicated organizing by the sectarians, contribute nothing but cold water to the movement against the war.

It is difficult to tell how effective the opposition to war will be. The Bush administration already claims that international opposition is of little concern, and so far

Bush and his managers have totally ignored the protesters and polls that indicate maximum concern and minimal support for war.

In his State of the Union address, Bush simply repeated unproven claims that Iraq has weapons of mass destruction which threaten the United States. He did not explain how this could be so when his own experts admit that Iraq's armed forces and military hardware are now at less than one-third the strength they were in 1991, when they were easily beaten. Nor did he explain how Iraq had become an ally of al-Qaeda, when Saddam's secular regime has been a sworn and consistent enemy of the Islamic fundamentalism of Osama bin Laden and his followers.

Of course, Bush dwelled on the evil acts committed by Saddam, while neglecting to admit that the United States was supporting Iraq at the time many of these crimes were being perpetrated. Nor did he mention that, according to Amnesty International, at least a dozen other nations have been guilty of the same or similar crimes, and that most of these nations are considered friendly by the administration.

Bush and his managers have totally ignored the protesters and polls that indicate maximum concern and minimal support for the war.

We don't know if the drive to war can be stopped. But we do know that the movement to prevent it—and especially the opportunity to educate the public about the administration's imperial ideology—must be encouraged in every way.

Those who attempt to use this movement for some narrow sectarian end are no threat. Their efforts against the war should be appreciated, their distractions ignored. Our energies should be directed at gaining the attention of political forces too timid to oppose the administration by demonstrating that we represent majority opinion on this issue.

—James Weinstein

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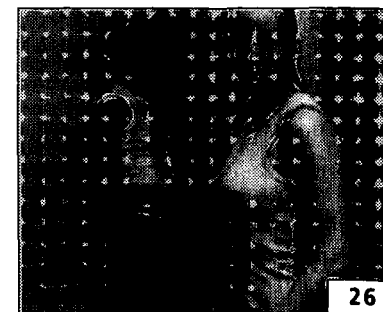
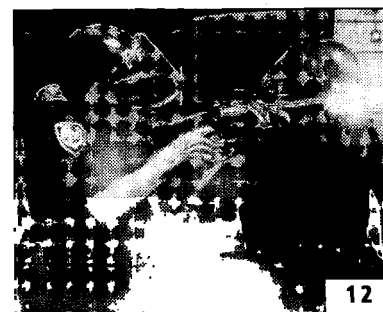
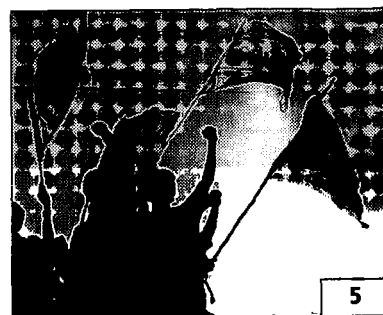
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José Clemente Orozco's pictures still burn.



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COVER PHOTO: MARCOS HAUPA

Postmodern Gospel

David Hawkes, who reviewed Mike Davis' book *Dead Cities*, does nothing but cause embarrassment ("The Bad News Bears," January 20). He makes much of modern science, but he is not a scientist, displays considerable ignorance of the current state of play, and espouses views that would make most scientists of my acquaintance roll their eyes. It's bad enough that he expressed sympathy for "intelligent design" creationism in the pages of *The Nation* last year. I would have hoped *In These Times* knew better than to provide a forum for his sort of silliness.

Taner Edis
Assistant Professor of Physics
Truman State University
Kirksville, Missouri

Is *In These Times* now promoting "Scientific Creationism," the Raelian UFO cult and political Islam? If not, I don't understand why you just published David Hawkes' bizarre and unnecessarily combative book review.

As far as I can tell, half of what Hawkes is saying is that the traditional secular left is overly addicted to 19th-century reductionist materialism, a position that I guess could actually serve as a useful plea for greater cultural tolerance among progressives. Hawkes goes on, however, to make the extraordinary statement that perhaps it is because of their materialist philosophy that so much of radical intelligentsia scurried after the imperialist bandwagon in the wake of the 9/11 attacks.

Say what again?

I strongly suspect that Hawkes is actually trying to make some larger point about a postmodernist approach to history and culture, rather than taking the position of Christian fundamentalists. But if Hawkes does have something useful and positive to tell secular leftists from either a spiritual or postmodernist perspective, I wish he'd say so, rather than using his column inches to trash the scientific beliefs held by other progressives.

However much a secular and materialist approach to philosophy may have been abused in Stalinist Russia, the philosophers of the Dutch and French Enlightenment first turned to materialism in the 1700s because a more spiritual approach to life during the wars of the Reformation had led to widespread sectarian hatred, chronic war, violent intolerance and the torturing of religious minorities across much of Europe.

There are good reasons why a generally materialist—or at least secular—tone pre-

vails today among the African-American Christians, secular gay men and lesbians, Buddhist-leaning environmental activists, Jewish, Protestant and Catholic Hispanic labor liberals, and abortion-friendly suburban soccer moms who make up the Democratic coalition. If progressive Democrats all started to argue about their non-materialist moral views today, I think, the divisiveness would never end.

If smart postmodernists like Hawkes now have some better approach to politics than the left's traditional secular focus on real-world problems—and if this approach can also avert sectarian divisions and foster solidarity, cooperation and improved understanding among progressives, so that we all can unite effectively to stop Bush's terrifying war buildup and his attempts to perpetuate poverty through the tax code—I sincerely hope that Hawkes or someone like him will share the postmodernist gospel with us secular sinners. We could all use some intellectual fresh air.

Andy Feeney
Washington

David Hawkes responds: Postmodern Western civilization is ruled by representation. Our politics, culture and philosophy consistently exalt image over substance. Above all, every sphere of life is dominated by the medium of representation known as "money." Financial value has no material or empirical existence, it is a purely imaginary, fetishistic entity. Empirical non-existence, it seems, is no bar to earthly dominion.

In my own books, I argue that this postmodern attitude to representation would in every previous age have been universally recognized as idolatry, in the theological sense, and that it continues to be so regarded by significant portions of the world's population. The biggest mistake the left could possibly make would be to contemptuously dismiss this criticism as the product of an obsolete superstition.

Dogmatic materialists and religious fundamentalists share one basic delusion. Both assume that scripture must be interpreted literally. But literalism has always been castigated by serious theologians as the most elementary of hermeneutic errors. In their naive faith in "science," secular intellectuals have simply abandoned religion to the fundamentalists, with disastrous results.

Despite Feeney's well-meant ecumenicalism, the secular left's contempt for religion clearly provides a rationale for imperialism. The incredible ignorance that leads Christopher Hitchens to believe he can refute the wisdom of three millennia with the announcement that "there is no such person as God," or that drives Salman Rushdie to envisage war with Iraq "bringing a more modern world into being," has tempted many into shameful complicity with this genuinely, metaphysically evil endeavor. We can no longer afford to indulge such cultural arrogance.

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Terry LaBan



Inspect This

America's own secret bioweapons program

By Frida Berrigan

As the controversy rages on over how long the United Nations should continue weapons inspections in Iraq, questions are being raised about the United States' own stockpile of chemical and biological weapons and new clandestine weapons programs. Activists and scientists are calling for weapons inspections in the United States.

On September 4, 2001, the *New York Times* printed a front-page article under the headline, "U.S. Germ Warfare Research Pushes Treaty Limits." While the story got lost in the events of September 11, the article revealed that the United States had initiated a secret weapons program that could be in violation of the Biological Weapons Convention, the landmark 1972 treaty that prohibits the development, production and stockpiling of biological agents that have no "prophylactic, protective or other peace purpose." Signers of the treaty pledged not to develop or obtain weapons "designed to use such agents or toxins for hostile purposes or in armed conflict."

The article's revelations shed light on why the United States, which had been the driving force behind the treaty since announcing its intention to unilaterally dismantle biological weapons stocks during the Nixon administration, rejected a July 2001 protocol that would have provided for regular inspections to verify compliance with the treaty. The Bush administration's rejection of the protocol left the treaty dead in the water.

During the Clinton administration, the United States initiated classified biodefense programs within the Energy and Defense departments and the Central Intelligence Agency. The CIA built and tested a cluster bomb that could spread biological agents over a wide area. The Pentagon's Threat Reduction Agency built a bioweapons plant from commercially available materials in the Nevada desert to demonstrate the ease with which such a project could be undertaken by terrorists or rogue states without

raising suspicions. The Defense Intelligence Agency tried to genetically engineer more powerful anthrax to replicate a Russian strain thought to be resistant to U.S. military vaccinations.

The United States maintains that these programs are defensive, claiming that in order to manufacture vaccines and develop defenses against biological attacks, researchers must first be able to produce the weapons. In the words of one official, the projects are "fully consistent with the treaty."

But Mark Wheelis and Malcolm Dando, authors of "Back to Bioweapons," an article

in the CIA's secret effort to make a more potent anthrax.

While the activities of most of these facilities are shrouded from public knowledge, a small Canadian effort hopes to expose them. The project, called "Rooting out Evil," is planning inspections of U.S. chemical, biological and nuclear sites like the ones listed above. In February, the inspection team, including Canadian and British members of parliament, a union leader and a professor, will enter the United States and demand "immediate and unfettered access" to chemical, biological and nuclear weapons sites.

Citizen weapons inspections have a long tradition. Most recently, three Catholic nuns entered an N-8 missile silo in northern Colorado wearing white jumpsuits with the logo "Disarmament Specialists" stenciled on the front, and "CWIT" (Citizen Weapons Inspection Team) written on the back. They occupied the site for several hours, dismantling the tracks that carry the silo lid to its firing position with hammers. They poured their own blood on the tracks and the silo. Despite the prayerful and symbolic nature of their action, they were charged with sabotage and "injury to property" and are facing a maximum sentence of 30 years.

Activists calling for and carrying out inspections of U.S. sites are finding allies within the scientific community. Jonathan King, an MIT biologist, says the United States should welcome inspectors into chemical and biological weapons programs. Scientists at the country's top universities are signing petitions and drafting codes of ethics for work in this field; some have even outlined a new biological weapons treaty that would make violations a crime under international law. As Harvard biologist Matthew Meselson, once a close adviser to Henry Kissinger, recently told the *Boston Globe*, bioweapons are a "threat to the species. It rises above considerations of national security, important as they may be."

Maybe once the U.N. inspectors are finished in Iraq, they can turn their attention to the United States. It seems they would be guaranteed abundant work and generous support from activists and scientists alike. ■

Frida Berrigan is a senior research associate with the Arms Trade Resource Center, a project of the World Policy Institute.



in the January/February issue of *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, warn that the implications of this decision are far-reaching and dangerous. "U.S. behavior suggests that its biodefense program is even larger than those portions that have been revealed," they write. "This U.S. exploration of the utility of biotech for bioweapons development is unwise, for the rest of the world will be obliged to follow suit," creating the conditions for a "global bioweapons arms race."

Quite a few facilities around the country are doing research on chemical and biological weapons. Among them are the U.S. Army Medical Research Institute for Infectious Diseases at Fort Detrick, Maryland; the U.S. Army Dugway Proving Ground in Utah; the U.S. Department of Agriculture Plum Island Animal Disease Center in New York; and the Battelle Memorial Institute in Columbus, Ohio. The *New York Times* named Battelle, a military contractor that analyzes biological information for the Pentagon, as a partici-

Selective 'Registration'

INS asks terrorists
to turn themselves in

By Adam Saytanides

CHICAGO—The latest round of special interviews by the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) has cast a pall over this city's Devon Avenue neighborhood, where tens of thousands of Pakistani immigrants have found a home away from home.

Bustling storefronts here cater almost exclusively to customers from the sub-continent: sari shops, Indo-Pak groceries, Bollywood movie rentals, and *chaat* houses dominate the scene. Urdu and Hindi are spoken here more than English. Most of the women still dress in the Eastern tradition, and scents of cardamom, curry and deep-fried samosas fill the air.

But the mood has become subdued as the February 21 deadline approaches for Pakistani males age 16 and older to register with the INS downtown. Hundreds of Iranians were arrested in Los Angeles last December when they showed up to register under the new program. And now Pakistani nationals in Chicago—particularly those whose immigration status is illegal, unclear or pending review—fear they will share the same fate.

On January 13, registration interviews began for "group 3"—immigrants from Pakistan and Saudi Arabia (groups 1 and 2 included most of the other Arab nations, along with Afghanistan and North Korea). By then, 80 to 90 local Pakistani men had already fled to Canada, some accompanied by their families. Two hundred immigrants had marched along Devon, protesting the new policy. And community leaders had begun holding meetings throughout Chicagoland to try to mitigate the effects of detentions they believe are imminent.

Raja Yakoob of the Pakistani-American National Alliance (PANA) was raised in

Pakistan and educated as a chemical engineer; he has been a U.S. resident for 13 years and owns several gas stations in the Chicago area. Yakoob estimates the Pakistani community in Chicago at close to 100,000. As many as 10,000 of those, he says, do not have valid visas.

"Our goal is to organize the people around this issue," he says. "If someone is detained, we want to help their families, give him legal help if he needs an attorney. If he is deported, to give him a ticket for that. And we can ask the congressmen and senators that they should repeal this law, and the people should have a normal life again."

Congress called for a system to more closely track foreign nationals visiting the United States in 1996, but the legislation was never implemented. When it was discovered that some of the terrorists responsible for the September 11 attacks had overstayed their visas, the INS came under harsh criticism. In August 2002, Attorney General John Ashcroft announced that the Department of Justice would begin the federal registration program.

Sadrudin Noorani is a successful Pakistani businessman and interpreter in Skokie, a suburb just 10 minutes from Devon Avenue. He does not disagree with the exit-entry registration law, but says he is unhappy with the way it's being carried out. "I do not oppose the law because it involves the safety and security of the country," he says. "When American people go out of the country, in most Asian and European countries, they have to register. ... But my opposition is that people will be going to register themselves, and they will be arrested. That's not something I have been able to digest."

The INS defends its policy. Spokesman Bill Strassberger says: "There's no way of getting around it, if they are out-of-status. The laws are on the books, and we have to enforce them."

At community meetings in Chicago, local INS representatives field repeated queries from residents wanting to know if they or their loved ones will be detained. The officials refuse to answer directly, saying only that each interview is "handled on a case-by-case basis" and that detention "is a possibility."

Noorani says the registration policy is disrupting the lives of ordinary,

THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW

SOME PEOPLE THINK IT'S IMPORTANT TO REDUCE OUR DEPENDENCE ON FOREIGN OIL--

YOU SEE, IF WE COULD JUST RAISE FUEL EFFICIENCY STANDARDS SLIGHTLY--

YEAH, SURE! AND I SUPPOSE NEXT YOU'LL WANT US ALL TO DRIVE GRANOLA POWERED CARS MADE OUT OF GORETEX OR SOMETHING!

HA, HA!



SO WE'LL WASTE AS MUCH GAS AS WE WANT, THANK YOU VERY MUCH! AFTER ALL, ISN'T THE PROFLIGATE CONSUMPTION OF NATURAL RESOURCES OUR GOD-GIVEN BIRTHRIGHT AS AMERICANS?

YES--BUT HE GAVE US AN ENORMOUS MILITARY BUDGET!

ENOUGH THEOLOGY, YOU TWO! LET'S GO FOR AN AIMLESS RIDE IN MY LINCOLN NAVIGATOR!

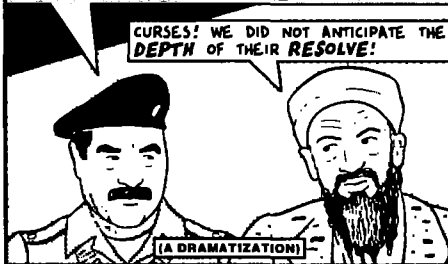


--BUT CLEARLY, THEY JUST DON'T GET IT! IF WE HAVE TO ADJUST OUR STANDARD OF LIVING IN ANY WAY WHATSOEVER--WELL--HAVEN'T SADDAM AND HIS TERRORIST BUDDIES ALREADY WON?

OUR PLAN TO HUMILIATE THE AMERICANS BY FORCING THEM TO DRIVE SMALLER AND MORE FUEL EFFICIENT VEHICLES HAS BEEN A FAILURE!

CURSES! WE DID NOT ANTICIPATE THE DEPTH OF THEIR RESOLVE!

[A DRAMATIZATION]



AND HOW BETTER TO SHOW OUR SUPPORT FOR OUR TROOPS--THAN TO FLAUNT OUR ADDICTION TO THE SUBSTANCE FOR WHICH THEY'LL SOON BE DYING?

CHECK IT OUT, GUYS! WE'VE GOT A HUMMER--JUST LIKE YOU! AND IT ONLY GETS EIGHT MILES TO THE GALLON!

YOUR SACRIFICES WON'T BE IN VAIN!



WAIT--I THOUGHT THIS WASN'T ABOUT THE OIL!

I SUPPOSE YOU STILL BELIEVE IN THE EASTER BUNNY, TOO.

respectable people, and points out that the interviewees have all entered the United States legally. "They came as a visitor maybe, or for the opportunity to work, and since then, they are paying taxes, they are raising their children, they're good contributors to this country's economy. Their only crime is they overstayed, and they don't have status."

Noorani says Pakistan's role in the war on terrorism and its historic alignment with the United States throughout the Cold War ought to count for something. He's not alone. Pakistan's foreign minister traveled to Washington recently, where he protested the inclusion of Pakistani immigrants in the exit-entry dragnet. Other Pakistani officials have also expressed their discontent.

"They allowed the United States to use their land when they were attacking the Taliban, and to chase al-Qaeda, and now they feel betrayed," says Taher Kameli, an immigration lawyer who recently set up a satellite office on Devon Avenue to assist those being interviewed. "I don't believe the Pakistani government expected this kind of treatment."

Kameli charges that the INS is keeping Muslim individuals in detention by setting unreasonably high bail. One of his clients, Kameli says, "has a U.S. citizen wife, has U.S. citizen children. He works here. His application is pending at [the INS]."

Bail for the client was set at \$15,000, and Kameli is outraged. "Nobody has \$15,000 to float around," he says. "The reason for bond is to make sure the individual is going to come back to court, to go through the proceedings—but wait a minute! The individual came to turn himself in to the INS voluntarily!"

Kameli says it's not unreasonable for the United States to implement a system to protect its borders, but he believes the INS is going about this all wrong.

"If the INS is after terrorists, it would be very odd that anyone's going to be caught by this system," he says incredulously. "Just imagine: If a person wants to hurt the country, they are not going to come into the INS and say, 'Hey INS, I'm here. Let me register and sign, and let you fingerprint me and take my picture, and whenever you want I'll be at your service—send me an e-mail once in a while, too.' It just blows my mind." ■

Loan Sharks

Indonesians protest the IMF

By Rachel Rinaldo

JAKARTA, INDONESIA—Mass protests filled the streets of Jakarta in January, as thousands of demonstrators loudly rejected the Indonesian government's plan to phase out subsidies on utility rates.

On January 1, President Megawati Sukarnoputri's government introduced major increases in the prices of fuel, electricity and telephone rates. The hikes

backed down, lowering the price increase for certain types of fuel and postponing the telephone rate hike.

The demonstrations diminished, but did not disappear. Instead, discontent with Megawati's economic policies appears to be mounting in advance of the 2004 election, as is popular criticism of foreign donors such as the IMF and World Bank. "The price hike is the consequence of the prescription of the IMF for Indonesia," says Binny Buchori of the International NGO Forum on Indonesian Development.

Buchori says that the purchasing capacity of Indonesians has dropped 30 percent since the 1997 economic crisis, causing real hard-



Indonesian students raise university flags in front of Jakarta's presidential palace during the fifth day of demonstrations in January.

were part of economic reforms backed by the International Monetary Fund and intended to help balance Indonesia's 2003 budget deficit, which is estimated at \$3.9 billion.

Over the next two weeks, daily anti-government rallies of hundreds and even thousands of people spread across the archipelago. At the peak of the demonstrations, students in Jakarta attempted to break down the gates of parliament, and another group seized several fuel trucks.

For many Indonesians, it was a reminder of the powerful May 1998 protests against a similar IMF-mandated rise in fuel prices, which helped trigger the resignation of President Suharto, the country's longtime dictator. This time, the government

ship. Many are still struggling. The urban poor are hard-hit by high inflation and joblessness, and more than half of the population of 220 million is estimated to live on less than \$2 a day. Given all this, Buchori says that calls to unseat Megawati are beside the point. "As long as we still have the contract with the IMF," she says, "we will still be in the same difficult situation."

Others go even further. Herly Putra, a university student and member of a leftist group called Front Nasional Demokratik, says it is important not just to oppose the price increases, but to ask why prices are being raised. It is not just Megawati who needs to go, he maintains, but the whole system. "International capitalism must leave Indonesia," he says.

Though government officials contend the price hikes affect mainly those in the tiny middle and upper-middle classes who own cars and have telephone lines, many Indonesians were incensed about the timing. The new policies were introduced just after the government announced that ex-bank owners, who hold combined debts to the state of more than \$13 billion (dating from the government's bailout of the banks in 1997), would be allowed to settle their debts without spending time in jail.

Indonesia's debt is now truly massive. Estimates put the country's foreign debt at \$70 billion and its domestic debt at \$80 billion, large amounts of which will start to come due in 2004. Despite the government's retreat on utility rates, the Consultative Group on Indonesia, an organization of donors including the World Bank and Asian Development Bank, announced on January 22 that it would provide Indonesia with \$2.7 billion in new loans to help finance the

country's budget deficit. The CGI and IMF are both urging Indonesia to speed up reforms in order to achieve higher economic growth rates.

The IMF has long urged Indonesia to abandon expensive subsidy programs. So far, the country has complied with its recommendations, raising revenue by eliminating subsidies and privatizing state firms. State-owned telecom company Indosat was recently sold to a Singaporean company, and a bill that would privatize Indonesia's water system is currently before parliament.

But activists and many politicians are calling for Indonesia to exit its \$5 billion IMF loan program when it expires this fall. "We all know the IMF works just to keep the investments of international capital in Indonesia safe," says Mulyandari of Koalisi Perempuan Indonesia, a women's group in Jakarta. "It is not to save the economic situation in Indonesia or to be able to develop and implement pro-poor policies."

Mulyandari says her group's members bear the burden of price increases. "Women are in the worst situation when the family is poor," she says, "because of their duty to manage the purse of the family, and because of the idea that as a mother and a wife, a woman should be able to ... leave her own needs behind."

Some activists advocate debt relief for Indonesia, arguing that the country should not have to bear responsibility for the huge loans incurred during the 30 years under Suharto. Large portions of those loans were lost to corruption. Anti-corruption groups are concerned that current loans will face the same fate.

For now, the anti-price-hike demonstrations are dying down (and being replaced by anti-war protests). But anger is still simmering, and policy-makers would be wise to heed it. "We know that this economic situation has a connection with the global situation," Mulyandari says. "We always mention that this economic situation is also the fault of international institutions." ■

The War on Hooky

In the vanguard of pedagogical innovation, Clayton County, Georgia, is hunting down truants with a SWAT team. Several times in the past year, sheriff's deputies have taken cover around middle schools and high schools in the county and pounced on students who tried to bust out without permission. Those detainees 17 and older have been dragged into the principal's office for a talking-to (that is, if checks for outstanding warrants came up empty). But younger ones are not so lucky. They have been hauled before juvenile court.

"Approximately 60 percent of juvenile crimes are committed during school hours, which means they have to be skipping school," a county juvenile court judge told the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, by way of justifying the new get-tough tactics. Plus, he said, 80 percent of American

teens were once in a classroom.

It's too early to say for sure, but the war on hooky seems to be yielding the same great results we've come to expect from the war on drugs. Forty-two punks have been busted this year, and class attendance is up 2 percent.

Beat This Rap

You don't get to see an up-and-coming prosecutor get nasty in front of a Web camera every day. But Assistant State Attorney Ira Karmelin, a top Palm Beach County inquisitor who has made no secret of his ambition to be a judge, recently put on a show for an investigative reporting team from Orlando, Florida's WFTV-Channel 9.

Karmelin was under the misapprehension that his audience was a 14-year-old girl—not a bunch of reporters—which may

explain why he slipped down to his knees and performed lewd acts, as the *Orlando Sentinel* put it. Although the bait for this sting was a newsroom cherub of legal age, the prosecutor faces felony charges of soliciting sex from a minor via the Internet and transmitting harmful images to a minor.

Games People Play

A Danish Christian scouting organization, FDF, is at a loss to explain a macabre game of tag organized at a recent jamboree. More than 100 children were designated as "Jews" and given yellow

star-shaped armbands they had to run around "Auschwitz" (a school yard speckled with swastikas and a sign reading "Arbeit Macht Frei") to escape "Nazis," who were played by adults.

After a torrent of complaints from parents, the FDF leader who organized the game allowed that he "may have crossed the line." "I don't know whether I should apologize," Jes Imer told Danish reporters, according to The Associated Press. "I didn't want the game to hurt anyone."



Life During Wartime

Chechen refugees are forced to return, but the battle continues

By Fred Weir

GROZNY, RUSSIA—Savdat Kalimuliyeva huddles in terror every night with her three children as Russian forces and elusive Chechen rebels battle each other with grenades, machine guns and mortars in the shattered buildings and streets around their refugee center.

Kalimuliyeva, who was forced by the Russians to move to Grozny from a relatively safe U.N.-supplied refugee camp in northern Chechnya last June, says that life in the shattered Chechen capital is a struggle to find food and water by day and a nerve-wracking ordeal of nearby gunfire by night.

Most of all, she fears for her 16-year-old son, Timur. "The Russians are always arresting Chechen boys at *blokposti*," she says, referring to the fortified security checkpoints that dominate every major intersection in Grozny. "Every Chechen male is a potential terrorist to them. What if they take my boy?"

Once a graceful, Caucasus-foothills city of 1 million, Grozny has been heavily shelled and carpet-bombed by Russian forces in two ferocious wars in the past eight years. While a few hundred thousand people may still inhabit the less severely damaged suburban areas, central Grozny today is a twisted landscape of wrecked buildings, minefields and rubble.

Those who still live here say they feel trapped between the harsh Russian security crackdowns and the still-active rebels who roam the ruins by night, planting mines and ambushing Russian patrols. "There is not even the most elementary safety," says Ruhman Musayeva, a news producer at the town's single state-run TV station. "People can't be sure they will even be alive tomorrow. Everything is so hard."

In a bid to end the war on Moscow's terms, President Vladimir Putin has decreed Chechnya will hold a referendum in March to vote on a new constitution, which would give the republic limited self-government within Russia. At the

same time, Moscow is creating Chechen government institutions—including a pro-Russian native security force—in an effort to "Chechenize" the conflict.

Russian officials insist the time is ripe for a change because life is "normalizing" in the war-ravaged republic. "The Russian forces here are not fighting a war," says Col. Ilya Shabalkin, head of the FSB security service's regional operations. "They are carrying out specific, targeted operations to catch individual terrorists. They are acting under the law."

But Chechens insist the war erupts all around them every night, and everyday life in Grozny is anything but normal. Even pro-Russian Chechens experience terror and humiliation when passing through the *blokposti* and during *zachistki*, the periodic security sweeps through neighborhoods by Russian forces. "So many men get arrested, insulted and beaten at *blokposti*," says Roza Yusupova, a senior nurse at the Grozny hospital. "My husband was dragged out of his car by Russian soldiers last summer—he was kicked and punched."

Chechen families have filed almost 2,000 complaints with military prosecutors regarding relatives they say were seized by Russian security forces and have disappeared. Her husband was "lucky," Yusupova says. "Many men from our village have been taken away and never returned."

Since Chechen terrorists seized 800 hostages in a Moscow theater in October, Russia has refused to consider the elected Chechen rebel president, Aslan Maskhadov, a legitimate negotiating partner. The only widely recognized democratic polls ever held in Chechnya, in early 1997, elected Maskhadov the republic's president.

"First there must be peace talks that include those who are actually fighting," says Tatiana Kasatkina, executive director of Memorial, the only Russian human rights group with a regular presence in Chechnya. "The Kremlin is backing itself into a corner, in which there will be no

one to talk to except its own appointees. This means the political process cannot work, and violence may even escalate."

To facilitate the transition, the Russians are planning to force the about 200,000 refugees—a third of the republic's population—who have fled Grozny over the past three years to return. Ten "temporary settlement centers" are being prepared in the city to receive them, though Memorial has reported that only half are so far habitable. Putin has pledged that no force will be used, and Russian officials on the ground repeat



A Russian soldier on patrol on Pervomayskaya Street, once the main commercial district in Grozny.

those assurances. But there is a hard edge to their words. "It's time to liquidate those rebel rest-houses in Ingushetia," says Shabalkin of the neighboring province where most refugees have gone for safety. "By spring, there won't be any Chechens in Ingushetia. They must return to their homeland."

Putin's political plan may work, if only because Moscow intends to keep its occupation force of 80,000 troops in the tiny republic for as long as it takes to impose the Kremlin writ. "Once I believed that Chechnya would gain its freedom, but now I see Russia will never let us go," says Uvais Musayev, a local politician who insists he doesn't support the rebels. He says Putin's scheme is just window-dressing to mask Russia's ongoing suppression of independent political expression in Chechnya. "We can only hope the world will wake up and do something to stop the genocide of the Chechen people." ■

Israel's Slippery Moral Slope

By Neve Gordon

JERUSALEM

Following my last military reserve duty, I was kicked out of my unit, the educational corps of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF).

There was a surrealistic dimension to the whole experience. I had driven a few hours to a base located near the Egyptian border after having been asked to lecture about "leadership" to 60 soldiers from the Givati infantry brigade who were about to begin an officers' training course. These young men are the military's future commanders, its elite.

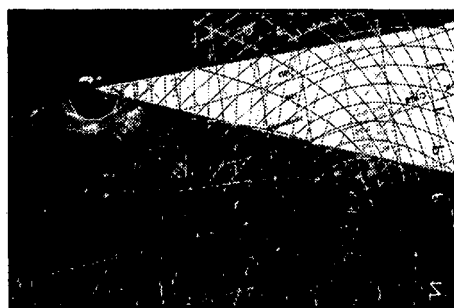
I decided to concentrate, in the lecture's first part, on the relationship between leadership and moral virtue, examining the characteristics distinguishing leaders such as Hitler, Stalin and Pol Pot from others like Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr. and Nelson Mandela. In the discussion that followed, the soldiers concluded that all of the leaders mentioned possessed charisma, intelligence and rhetorical skills, but only the latter three were guided by universal moral values—the equality of all people.

The second part of the presentation focused on leadership within the IDF. My main contention was that so long as the occupation of Palestinian territories continues, the Israeli military will not produce worthy leaders. The argument was mainly structural: that within the context of the occupation, even the most humane officers would find themselves trampling human dignity. To substantiate my claim I offered several examples in which IDF soldiers committed war crimes in the Gaza Strip, an area well known to my audience.

Following the lecture, the soldiers contested my analysis concerning IDF leadership. First, they argued that the IDF's primary objective is to protect Israeli citizens, and therefore must, at times, violate human rights and international law. "To save lives in Tel-Aviv, I have to detain Palestinians at a checkpoint," one soldier exclaimed, adding, "If, for example, in the process an infant dies because of delayed access to a hospital, then so be

it." When I asked if the same rationale applied to two, three or more babies, he replied in the affirmative, without batting an eye.

The soldiers then went on to claim that the "IDF is the most moral army in the world." While several thought this to be axiomatic, others felt it necessary to offer evidence. "Several months ago we entered a refugee camp to apprehend



a 'wanted' Palestinian," one said. "We could have ordered a helicopter to bomb the house where the suspect was hiding, but we decided that the platoon would enter the camp despite possible risk to our soldiers; we did not want to harm innocent people."

Other soldiers also presented examples to show how on numerous occasions the IDF could have employed more brutal means, but refrained from doing so to minimize the number of innocent Palestinian casualties.

While these two arguments are powerful, both suffer from a common fallacy of moral relativism. Regarding the logic underlying the first claim—the hypothetical death of the child at the checkpoint—Jewish political philosopher Hannah Arendt once said that when the end justifies the means, then everything is permitted.

And indeed, during the past two years we have seen the dangerous and devastating implications of a moral position that lacks an anchor. It began with the unrelenting curfews, followed by reports of babies dying at checkpoints and snipers shooting children. This was just the beginning; the military continued its moral slide as soldiers demolished homes with their residents still inside, and Israeli

pilots bombed populated buildings located in town centers.

The soldiers' second claim suffers from a similar error of moral relativism. Because there is no limit to human cruelty, it will always be possible to argue that the IDF could have behaved more brutally in a given situation. The soldier who detained a sick woman for seven hours at the checkpoint could have beaten her and prevented her from passing through at all; yet this in no way justifies a seven-hour delay. The pilot who dropped a one-ton bomb on populated houses, killing nine children, could have destroyed an entire neighborhood; but the "mercy" he showed does not in any way make his act moral.

The chain of events since the outbreak of the second *intifada* suggests that the IDF has employed more and more force against a primarily civilian population, and that every action is justified by comparing it to more brutal actions the IDF could, theoretically, have carried out.

In the absence of a universal moral approach—whereby there are things that one simply does not do—one is left with a tribal or relativistic worldview. Here the right to human dignity is contingent on national, ethnic or religious affiliation.

Because the IDF has rejected the notion that human beings are created equal, every young commander who fol-

When the end justifies the means, then everything is permitted.

lows its codes will inevitably slide down the slippery moral slope. As the soldiers themselves seemed to understand at the outset of the lecture, universal moral values are what distinguish corrupt from worthy leaders—an axiom that must be applied to the IDF, too. ■

Neve Gordon teaches politics at Ben-Gurion University and is a contributor to *The Other Israel: Voices of Refusal and Dissent* (New Press). He can be reached at ngordon@bgumail.bgu.ac.il.

The Real American Taliban

By Susan J. Douglas

It is not surprising when *The Nation* features an article about the Bush administration's assault on women's reproductive rights. But when the *New York Times* prints a huge Sunday editorial titled "The War Against Women" that takes up two-thirds of the op-ed space, something is afoot.

That January 12 piece gathered together a range of seemingly minor items—who was appointed to such-and-such unheard of commission, what was the U.S. position at a U.N.-sponsored conference held on the other side of the planet—and showed how, when put together, they constitute a domestic and international offensive against the health and safety of women and children.

Remember when Laura Bush (who may be—I am very sorry—the most cynically deployed first lady in our history) took to the airwaves in fall 2001 to assert that the war in Afghanistan was really about freeing women from the Taliban's tyranny? Well, aren't they lucky. Now they and the billions of other women around the world, especially in poor and developing countries, can be subject to our very own not kinder, not gentler Taliban: the U.S. Christian right.

Laura Bush got a lot of play for her seemingly brief flirtation with feminism and her deep empathy for Afghan women. In August, to much less media fanfare, her husband decided to withhold \$2.4 million in emergency funding authorized by Congress for programs to support women in Afghanistan, who suffer from one of the highest infant-mortality rates in the world.

President Bush also withheld \$200 million to combat AIDS/HIV in Afghanistan. Why? Any program around the world that promotes anything other than "abstinence only" approaches to AIDS—like, say, condom use—is immoral and must be squashed.

Also under the media radar screen was Bush's freezing of \$3 million in funding to the World Health Organization because it conducts research on mifepristone, an early-abortion drug. And do women know that Bush opposes ratifying the Convention on the Elimination of

All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), which requires signatories to remove barriers that discriminate against women? The United States is the only industrialized nation not to sign; 170 other countries have.



What Team Bush has been doing is shrewd and lethal. They know that the news media—already swamped covering the Iraq story, the economy and male-pattern baldness—do not cover stories so minor as who gets appointed to the Reproductive Health Advisory Committee of the Food and Drug Administration or who represents the United States (or what they say) at U.N. conferences on sustainable development and population growth. But like the pod people from *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, these aliens have colonized a host of boards, panels and delegations at home and abroad. While they're not always successful in getting the rest of the world to agree that the best form of population control is to tie women's legs together, they do slow down or derail the proceedings at hand.

Consider just one part of the fundamentalist phalanx: the Bush appointees to the FDA's reproductive health committee. They include Dr. David Hager, who opposes prescribing contraceptives to unmarried women, but does prescribe the reading of biblical scriptures to treat PMS. Also new to the committee is Dr. Joseph Stanford, who refuses to prescribe any contraceptives, period. Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy Thompson, whose anti-choice record as governor of Wisconsin made

him a darling of the right, appointed abstinence-only ideologue Dr. Alma Golden to oversee the implementation of Title X, the country's family-planning program. In September, Bush named a member of a group called—get this—"Virginity Rules," one Dr. Freda McKissic Bush, to the Centers for Disease Control Advisory Committee on HIV and STD Prevention. The administration's delegations to U.N. meetings include John Klink, former chief negotiator for the Vatican.

Each appalling appointment, taken on its own, can seem like one individual concession to the Christian right that progressives must swallow. But taken together—and added to more newsworthy moves like Bush's reinstatement of the "global gag rule," which prohibits any health care providers who receive U.S. aid from talking about or providing abortions—we see a carefully coordinated *jihad*. Given the "war on terror" that allegedly targets Islamic extremists, it is peculiar that at U.N. con-

The Bush offensive against the health and safety of women is a carefully coordinated *jihad*.

ferences, the U.S. delegation colludes with Islamic fundamentalists to try to restrict contraception information, abortion and sex education.

The Team Bush policies at home and abroad, if allowed to triumph, guarantee ongoing illness, death, poverty and oppression of women. (In Texas, which has an abstinence-only sex-education program, the rate of sexually transmitted diseases has soared.) But we are not helpless in the face of the *jihad*. Join Planned Parenthood or another reproductive rights group you admire, read their Web sites, send them money, and let Congress know that you regard Bush and his extremist appointments as the real "American Taliban." ■

Susan J. Douglas is a professor of communications studies at the University of Michigan.

THE FIRST TON

By Joel Bleifuss

Sectarian Reality

Opposition to President Bush's plans for a war against Iraq has burgeoned over the past weeks. But one would never know the extent of that opposition from reading national newspapers or listening to network newscasts.

What little discussion there is about the anti-war movement has tended to focus on dissent within the movement, specifically criticism of International ANSWER (Act Now to Stop War and End Racism), the coalition that helped organize the national demonstrations on January 18.

ANSWER was founded in part by the Workers World Party, a Trotskyist group that grew out of a 1959 split with the Socialist Workers Party over the Chinese Revolution. In 1989, Workers World supported the Chinese government in its Tiananmen Square crackdown, aimed at "stopping the counter-revolutionary movement," as one party member put it.

But spending too much time contemplating the fringes (other than for their entertainment value) detracts from what is in fact becoming popular opposition to the looming war. The hundreds of thousands of people who took to the streets on January 18 did so to stop the war, not so they could sign up for a Maoist revolution.

Progressive pundits like Todd Gitlin fretfully fulminate about the tainting of the anti-war cause. But one only has to look back 35 years to the anti-Vietnam War movement, and the lunacy of the Weatherman faction of SDS, to see the damage caused by granting undue attention and credence to fringe political groups.



Anti-war protesters rally in Times Square on January 29. After more than an hour of sign-waving and slogan-chanting, protesters marched to U.N. headquarters.

These days, the political extremism that warrants the most concern is coming from the Bush White House.

Notable Quote

"I only hope to God [that] President Bush has something else up his sleeve, something that he's not telling us, because the option of a war is a disaster," says an anonymous Pentagon analyst who is in touch with the Project on Government Oversight, the federal watchdog group.

Forbidden Words

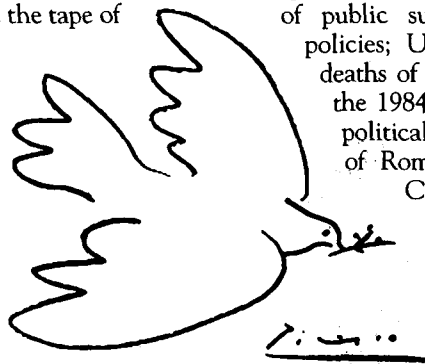
Though you won't see it on the big networks, *Hidden Wars of Desert Storm*, a documentary by Gerard Ungerman and Audrey Brohy examines the unstated agendas of the first Bush White House during the Gulf War (www.hiddenwars.com). This fine example of investigative journalism was broadcast by WorldLink as part of its new Spotlight series (www.worldlinktv.org). The film, which details the hypocrisy of U.S. policy toward Iraq, includes formerly

unseen footage of Gen. Norman Schwarzkopf, among others.

What the film does not include is the answer former Secretary of State Madeline Albright gave when asked about the hundreds of thousands of Iraqi deaths caused by sanctions. "We think the price is worth it," Albright told *60 Minutes*. CBS News refused to release the tape of that 1996 broadcast.

And the Oscar goes to ...

Plans are under-way in Tinsel Town to mobilize star power and bring the peace movement into the homes of millions of TV viewers during the March 23 Academy Awards ceremony. Hollywood Uniting for Peace will be asking all Oscar nominees and presenters to wear a specially designed "Peace Pin," based on Pablo Picasso's "Dove of Peace."



Peace Cities

Chicago is not the only city to go on record against the United States making a unilateral declaration of war against Iraq. More than 60 other communities are considering similar resolutions. See www.citiesforpeace.org, a Web site sponsored by the Institute for Policy Studies, and add your city's name to that list. A mass movement against the war is forming, regardless of whether the Beltway establishment approves.

Not Amused

Burson-Marsteller, one of the world's top PR firms, has sicced its legal team on Hampshire College freshman Paul Hardwin. His crime? Hardwin allegedly violated the firm's trademark by creating a fake Burson-Marsteller site. Hardin, unable to afford a lawyer, is mounting his own defense.

In his 57-page rebuttal of the charges (www.reamweaver.com/bmwipo/response.htm#reality), Hardin observes that Burson-Marsteller's stated mission is "to ensure that the perceptions which surround our clients and influence their stakeholders are consistent with real-

ity." That is exactly what his site is doing, writes Hardin, since he is providing the public with "academic and journalistic materials about Burson-Marsteller's involvement with and relationship to, for example, Philip Morris and the National Smoker's Alliance, a consumer front group designed to create the appearance of public support for big-tobacco policies; Union Carbide and the deaths of 20,000 people following the 1984 disaster in Bhopal; and political regimes such as that of Romanian dictator Nicolae Ceausescu and, more recently, Saudi Arabia, following the events of September 11; and to properly associate them with the relevant Trademark so that they may be understood accordingly by Internet users."

Military Merchants

In November, the government of Colombia cancelled a \$234 million deal with Brazil to buy a squadron of Brazil-made Embraer fighter planes. Gen. James Hill, commander of U.S. military forces in Latin America, had warned President Alvaro Uribe that such a purchase could hurt Bogota's chances of receiving future U.S. aid. Instead, Hill suggested that Colombia consider sending those millions to Texas-based Lockheed-Martin and have the company refurbish American aircraft Colombia already owns.

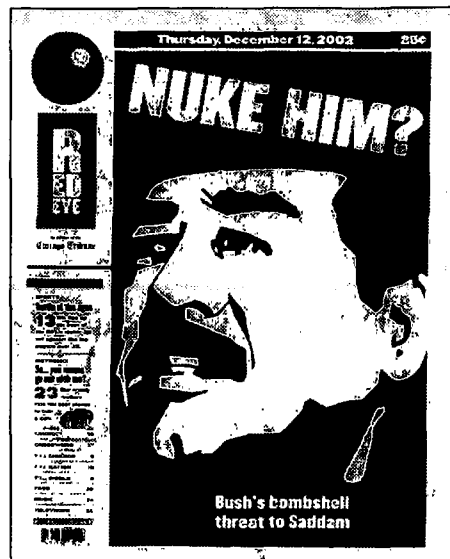
However, new Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva is not likely to be swayed by a mercenary general. Two days after Lula's inauguration, Defense Minister Jose Viegas announced that Brazil would not be spending \$765 million buying 12 new fighter jets. "Funding social projects is more important in Brazil right now," he said.



Remedial Readers

Chicago's two newspapers, the *Tribune* and the *Sun-Times*, have spun off junior dailies in a battle to attract younger viewers—I mean—readers. How low can they go? The *Sun Times' Red Streak* has yet to match the *Tribune's Red Eye*, which put Saddam on its cover under the headline, "Nuke Him?"

Who says nuclear war is not an option?



Incendiary Speech

Last December, Richard Humphreys of Portland, Oregon, was sentenced to 37 months in prison for threatening to harm or kill President Bush. A bartender in Watertown, South Dakota reported Humphreys to the police after he overheard him talking to a truck driver about a "burning Bush" and the possibility that someone might douse the president with flammable liquid and light it. In his defense, Humphreys testified: "I said, 'God might speak to the world through a burning Bush.' I had said that before, and I thought it was funny."

Heads Up!

The Joseph Lieberman Yarmulke is a "fun, fashionable" way to support this "historic campaign," says Jason Erkes, the man who sells what we hope will soon be a memento of a losing effort. ■

Taking Back Argentina



The long journey from the Dirty War to democracy

By Naomi Klein

BUENOS AIRES, ARGENTINA

How do you celebrate the anniversary of something that is impossible to define? That question faced tens of thousands of Argentines on December 20, as they marched from all corners of Buenos Aires to the historic Plaza de Mayo. It was a year ago to the day since the first *Argentinazo*, a word that is completely untranslatable into English or, for that matter, Spanish.

The *Argentinazo* was not a riot exactly, although it sure looked like one on television, with looters ransacking supermarkets and mounted police charging into crowds; 33 people were killed across the country. It wasn't a revolution, either, although it sort of looked like one, with angry crowds storming the seat of government and forcing the president to resign in disgrace.

But unlike a classic revolution, the *Argentinazo* was not organized by an alternate political force that wanted to take power for itself. And unlike a riot, it pulsed with a unified and unequivocal demand: the immediate removal of all the corrupt politicians who had grown rich while Argentina, once the envy of the developing world, spiraled into poverty.

In reality, the *Argentinazo* was just what the word itself sounds like: a chaotic explosion of Argentinean-ness, during which hundreds of thousands of people suddenly and spontaneously left their homes, poured into the streets of the capital, banged

pots and pans, yelled at banks, fought police, revved motorcycles, sang soccer anthems and managed to send the president fleeing his palace in a helicopter. Over the following two weeks, the country would go through five presidents and would default on its \$95 billion debt, the largest default in history.

One year on, as enormous crowds fill the Plaza de Mayo once again, this clearly is a significant day—but what, exactly, is it marking? Is it a celebration of a national revolt against corporate globalization, a mood that seems to be spreading across Latin America? Is it the beginning of *Argentinazo: The Sequel*, a forward-looking movement that will replace the International Monetary Fund's failed recipes with something better?

December 20, 2002, is not a day of jubilant celebration or of particularly convincing fist-waving. The mood, instead, is one of mourning, nowhere more so than at the corner of Avenida de Mayo and Chacabuco, in front of the headquarters of HSBC Argentina, a hulking 28 stories of Darth Vader-tinted glass. On this same piece of asphalt, 23-year-old Gustavo Benedetto fell to the ground exactly a year earlier, killed by a bullet that came from inside the bank.

In the *Argentinazo* of December 20, 2001 (above), hundreds of thousands poured into the streets, where they clashed with police; President Fernando de la Rúa (far right) would resign in disgrace.

The man charged with Benedetto's murder—who had been in a group of police officers caught on video shooting through the bank's tinted glass—is Lt. Jorge Varando, chief of HSBC's building security. He is also a retired elite military officer, and a graduate of the infamous School of the Americas, who was active during the '70s when 30,000 Argentines were "disappeared," many of them kidnapped from their homes, brutally tortured and then thrown from planes into the muddy waters of the Rio de la Plata. The generals called this campaign a "war on terror," but the name that has stuck ever since is "the Dirty War."

At the corner of Avenida de Mayo and Chacabuco, where the HSBC's plate-glass facade is now encased in reinforced steel, Argentina's past and present have come crashing together. Benedetto's alleged killer worked for a foreign bank, one of the very same foreign banks that swallowed the savings of millions of Argentines when the government declared a freeze on bank withdrawals in early December 2001.

While the accounts were locked, the peso was "unpegged" from the dollar, and the currency went into free-fall. When the banking freeze was partially lifted a year later, and customers could once again get at their money, their savings had lost two-thirds of its value.

Though banks such as HSBC blame the government for the freeze, the measure was in fact a response to the fact that private banks had helped their wealthiest customers whisk roughly \$20 billion out of Argentina over the previous year, much of it untaxed. At the time, there was no ban on taking capital out of the country.

At the core of the allegations against the foreign banks is the timing: The exodus of cash took place only days before the government froze all withdrawals, leading to a widespread belief that the banks—unlike regular Argentines—had been tipped off that the freeze was imminent. Indeed, for many of Argentina's richest families and businesses, the banking fiasco and devaluation has actually made them richer than they were before. They now pay their employees, their expenses and their debts in devalued pesos, but—thanks to the banks—their savings are safely stored outside the country in U.S. dollars. It's a highly profitable arrangement.

After the \$20 billion in "disappeared" capital was discovered, there was so much public outrage that several foreign bankers faced charges under Argentina's "economic subversion" law, which prohibits acts that sabotage the country's economy. This obstacle was neatly dealt with last May, however, when a coalition of banks, headed by HSBC, successfully lobbied to have the law struck down.

Gustavo Benedetto was only one of the 33 people who died violently during the *Argentinazo* of 2001. But his story has become a symbol for a country now trying to make sense of its unrelenting economic crisis. How can children die of hunger every day in a country which is so naturally abundant that it

once fed much of Europe and North America? How can a nation where factory workers used to buy homes and cars on the highest wages in Latin America now have the highest unemployment rate on the continent and an average wage lower than Mexico's? Benedetto thought that his government owed him answers to those questions, which was why he went to the plaza that December day.

Gustavo loved reading books about history and economics. According to his older sister, Eliana, "He wanted to understand how such a great country could have ended up in such a mess." Gustavo dreamed of being a professor of history, but that was a goal for a more optimistic time. When his father died in March 2000, Gustavo had to find a job, any job, to support his mother and sister. It was a bad time to be looking for work. In La Tablada, the post-industrial suburb where the Benedettos live, most of the factories were already boarded up. The best job he could find was as a supermarket clerk in a nearby mall.

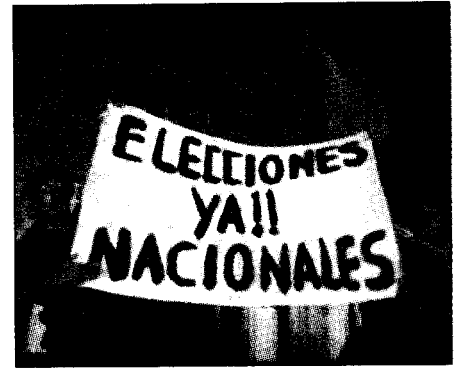
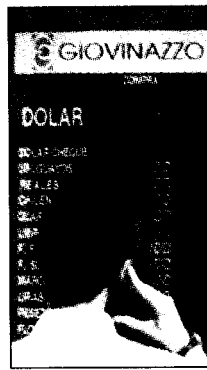
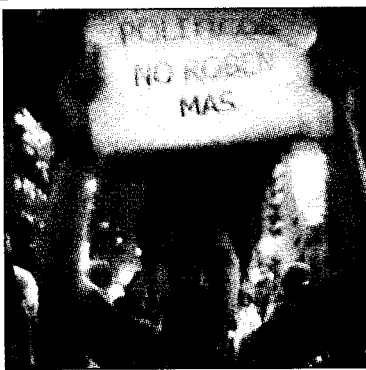
Oddly, when Argentina had less wealth on paper, fewer Argentines went hungry. Many complex economic factors contributed to this shift, from changes in agricultural export crops to falling wages in the industrial sector. But there were some simple changes that played a part, too, such as the fact that small neighborhood markets used to sell food on credit during difficult times. This little bit of grace disappeared when Argentina became a globalization showcase, and those small

A single rebellious cry rose up from the crowds of grandmothers and high school students, motorcycle couriers and unemployed factory workers: "¡Que se vayan todos!"—everyone must go!

shops were replaced by foreign-owned supermarkets the size of Aztec temples, with names such as Carrefour, Wal-Mart and Dia, the Spanish-owned chain where Gustavo Benedetto finally managed to get a job.

So it probably wasn't a coincidence that, in the days leading up to the *Argentinazo*, many of the supermarkets found themselves under siege, looted by mobs of unemployed men, their faces covered by T-shirts turned into makeshift balaclavas. When Gustavo showed up for work at Dia on December 19, the atmosphere was unbearably tense: No one knew whether this concrete castle was about to be the next stormed by hungry, angry mobs. At noon, the manager decided to end the suspense by closing early.

When Gustavo arrived home, he turned on the television. What he saw was a country in open revolt, with protests erupting everywhere. All day and night, he flicked from one station to the next, but by 10:40 p.m. every station was showing the same image: President Fernando de la Rúa, his face clammy with sweat,



stiffly reading from a prepared text. Argentina, he said, was under attack from “groups that are enemies of order who are looking to spread discord and violence.” He declared a state of siege.

For many Argentines, the president’s declaration sounded like a prelude to a military coup—and that was a fatal mistake for the de la Rúa government. Gustavo watched live images of the Plaza de Mayo filling up with people. They were banging pots and pans with spoons and forks, a wordless but roaring rebuke of the president’s instructions: Argentines would not give up basic freedoms in the name of “order,” they declared. And then a single rebellious cry rose up from the crowds of grandmothers and high school students, motorcycle couriers and unemployed factory workers, their words directed at the politicians, the bankers, the IMF and every other “expert” who claimed to have the perfect recipe for Argentina’s prosperity and stability: “¡Que se vayan todos!”—everyone must go!

Gustavo slept fitfully that night. When he arrived for work the next morning, the store was completely boarded up, so he went back home and turned on the television again. It was then that he felt an impulse he had never had before—he wanted to join a political demonstration. All of a sudden, Gustavo Benedetto, an easygoing guy who had not protested against anything in his life, leapt up from the couch, flicked off the TV and told his mother that he was going downtown.

On his way to the bus stop, Gustavo asked several friends from the neighborhood if they wanted to come along with him—to be part of this history they were seeing unfold on their television screens. But he couldn’t find any takers: most people in La Tablada had had enough of history. In La Tablada, the Dirty War had been even filthier than it was elsewhere. And since any kind of contact with a leftist was enough to get you branded a collaborator, the safest course of action was to retreat into your home: Doors were closed on former friends looking for sanctuary, blinds were hastily drawn when there was a commotion outside, the radio was turned up to drown out screams from neighboring apartments. In La Tablada, as elsewhere in Argentina, residents learned to live faithfully by the philosophy of the terror times: “No se meta”—don’t get involved.

Gustavo, however, had decided to break with that tradition. He had no way of knowing that the tactics of the dictatorship were about to return to the streets of Buenos Aires. During the two hours it took him to get from the suburbs to downtown Buenos Aires, the chief of police had sent down an order to “clear the Plaza de Mayo.” At first, the riot squads used rubber bullets and tear gas, but they soon ran out of those, and switched to live ammunition.

The police pushed the crowds on to Avenida de Mayo, and the crowds pushed back. At around 4 p.m., a group of around 20 police officers were looking for a safe place to take refuge and reload their weapons. They chose the lobby of the HSBC, one of the most secure buildings in the city because it also houses the Israeli Embassy. A handful of demonstrators—fewer than five, according to court documents—broke away from the streams of people heading for the Plaza de Mayo and began throwing stones at the bank. One man shattered a pane of the glass with a metal bar.

The police and private security guards inside panicked and opened fire. According to evidence heard later in court, in just four seconds a hail of at least 59 bullets was fired onto the packed street outside. Just then, Gustavo Benedetto, walking on his own and having been downtown for less than an hour, happened to turn on to the Avenida de Mayo. A bullet caught him in the back of the head.

The HSBC may have been a good place for the police officers to find sanctuary during the chaos of the *Argentinazo*, but when it comes to a murder committed from its lobby, a bank, with its security cameras monitoring every angle, offers little cover. The HSBC’s own surveillance cameras, since entered as court evidence, clearly show police and bank security officers aiming and firing their weapons through the plate-glass window. This evidence has led to a rare event in the annals of Argentinean justice: the arrest of a former military officer on a charge of murder.

Jorge Varando has testified that he did not shoot Benedetto and argues that he acted properly as a security officer defending the bank. In a recent radio interview, he is quoted as admitting to firing his gun, saying that he did so “in total tranquillity” and “to stop those trying to enter the building.” HSBC has so far refused to comment on the case because of the ongoing legal proceedings, except to note that its employee Varando has steadfastly maintained his innocence.

Up until quite recently, Argentina pursued an official policy of amnesia when it came to the crimes of the Dirty War. Sure, human rights organizations issued scathing reports, the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo marched, and the children of disappeared parents showed up, from time to time, outside the homes of ex-military figures to throw red paint. But before the *Argentinazo*,

After the *Argentinazo* (above, left to right): 7-year-old Lautario Palacios holds a sign demanding that politicians stop robbing; the financial crisis fills local front-pages; a Buenos Aires man watches the exchange rate plummet; protesters clamor for new national elections.

most middle-class Argentines regarded such actions as macabre rituals from a bygone era. Hadn't these people received the memo? The country had moved on.

At least it was supposed to, according to former President Carlos Menem, a Ferrari driving free-marketeer who is Argentina's very own morphing of Margaret Thatcher and John Gotti. Menem was first elected in 1989, with the economy in recession and inflation soaring. Claiming that many of Argentina's economic troubles stemmed from botched attempts by his predecessor to bring the generals of the Dirty War to justice, Menem offered an alternative approach: Instead of going backward into the hell of unmarked graves, Argentines should wipe the slate clean, join the global economy and then put all of their energy into the pursuit of economic growth.

After pardoning the generals, Menem launched a zealous program of mass privatizations, public-sector layoffs, labor market "flexibilization" and corporate incentives. He slashed federal meals programs, cut the national unemployment fund by almost 80 percent, laid off hundreds of thousands of state employees and made many strikes illegal. Menem dubbed this rapid free-market makeover "surgery without anesthesia," and assured voters that, once the short-term pain subsided, Argentina would be, in the words of one of his advertising campaigns, "born again."

The middle-class residents of Buenos Aires, many of them ashamed of their own complicity or complacency during the Dirty War, enthusiastically embraced the idea of living in a shiny new country without a past. The national GDP increased by 60 percent over the next decade, and foreign investment poured in. But just as Enron's stockholders did not care to look too closely at the books so long as their profits were going up, Argentina's foreign investors and lenders somehow failed to see that Menem's lean, mean government was \$80 billion deeper in debt in 1999 than the 1989 gov-

The great success of the Dirty War was the culture of fear and individualism it left behind.

ernment had been. Or that, thanks largely to layoffs at privatized firms, unemployment had soared from 6.5 percent in 1989 to 20 percent in 2000.

In short, "Menem's Miracle", as *Time* gushingly called it, was a mirage. The wealth flowing in '90s Argentina was a combination of speculative finance and one-off sales: the phone company, the oil company, the rails, the airline. After the initial cash infusion and greased palms, what was left was a hollowed-out country, costly basic services and a working class that wasn't working. It also left behind a Wild West-style deregulated financial sector that allowed Argentina's richest families to move \$140 billion in private wealth out of the country and into foreign bank accounts—more than either the national GDP or the foreign debt.

As Argentina's wealth disappeared, destined for bank accounts in Miami and stock exchanges in Milan, the collective amnesia of the Menem years wore off, too. Today, almost 20 years after the junta's dictatorship ended and with the old military generals dead or dying, the ghosts of the 30,000 disappeared have suddenly reappeared. In the courts and on the streets, a national debate erupted not only about how so many had got away with murder, but about the reasons why the terror happened in the first place: Why did those 30,000 people die? In whose interest were they killed? And what was the connection between those deaths and the free-market policies that had failed the country so spectacularly?

On the face of it, there is nothing to connect Benedetto's murder to the past, and there is no comparison between the repression during the *Argentinazo* and the terror of the Dirty War. Yet the Benedetto case highlights the changing role of the military, the state and financial interests, and the current role of ex-military officers.

In the '70s, Jorge Varando worked for a military regime that opened up Argentina's banking sector to private banks. In 2001, with the military downsized along with the rest of the public sector, he worked directly for one of those banks. The fear is that the grand achievement of two decades of democracy is only that the middleman was cut out and repression privatized. Argentina's banks and corporations are guarded by units of armed former military officers, who protect them against public protesters, raising difficult questions about the compromises that were made in the country's transition from dictatorship to democracy.

Today, the history of that transition is being rewritten on the streets. There is no neat "before" and "after" the dictatorship. The dictatorship's project is instead emerging as a process: The generals prepped the patient, then Menem performed "the surgery." The junta did more than disappear the union organizers who might have fought the mass layoffs and the socialists who might have refused to implement the IMF's latest austerity plan.

The great success of the Dirty War was the culture of fear and individualism that it left behind.

The generals understood that their true obstacle to complete social control was not leftist rebels, but the very presence of tight-knit communities and civil society. That is why they set out to "disappear" the public sphere itself. On the first day of the 1976 coup, the military banned all "public spectacles," from carnivals to theater to horse races. Public squares were strictly reserved for shows of military strength, and the only communal experience permitted was soccer. At the same time, the military launched a campaign to turn the entire population into snitches: State-run newspapers were packed with announcements reminding citizens that it was their civic duty to report anyone who seemed to be doing anything "subversive." And when the population had retreated into their homes, the economic project of the dictatorship could be continued and deepened by successive civilian governments without even having to resort to messy repression—at least until recently.

In the rubble that was left of Argentina after December 2001, something extraordinary started to happen: Neighbors poked their heads out of their apartments and houses, and, in the absence of a political leadership or a party to make sense of the spontaneous explosion of which they had been a part, they began

to talk each other. To think together. By late January 2002, there were already some 250 "asambleas barriales"—neighborhood assemblies—in downtown Buenos Aires alone. The streets, parks and plazas were filled with meetings, as people stayed up late into the night, planning, arguing, testifying, voting.

Many of those first assemblies were more like group therapy than political meetings. Participants spoke about their experience of isolation in a city of 12 million. Academics and shopkeepers apologized for not watching out for each other, managers admitted that they used to look down on unemployed factory workers, assuming that they deserved their plight, never thinking that the crisis would reach the bank accounts of the cosmopolitan middle class. And these apologies for present-day wrongs soon gave way to tearful confessions about events dating back to the dictatorship. A housewife would stand up and publicly admit that, three decades earlier, when she heard yet another story about someone's brother or husband being disappeared, she had learned to close her heart to the suffering, telling herself "por algo ser"—it must have been for something.

Most assemblies began, in the face of so much planned misery, to plan something else: joy, solidarity, another kind of economy. Soup kitchens were opened, job banks and trading clubs formed. In the past year, as many as 150 factories, bankrupt and abandoned by their owners, have been taken over by their workers and turned into cooperatives or collectives. At tractor plants, supermarkets, printing houses, aluminum factories and pizza parlors, decisions about company policy are now made in open assemblies, and profits are split equally among the workers.

In recent months, the *fábricas tomadas* (literally, "taken factories") have begun to network among themselves and are beginning to plan an informal "solidarity economy": Garment workers from an occupied factory, for example, sew sheets for an occupied health clinic; a supermarket in Rosario, turned into a workers' cooperative, sells pasta from an occupied pasta factory; occupied bakeries are building ovens with tiles from an occupied ceramic plant. "I feel like the dictatorship is finally ending," one *asamblista* told me when I first arrived in Buenos Aires. "It's like I've been locked in my house for 25 years and now I am finally outside."

Gabriela Mitidieri was born in 1984, the first full year of elected government in Argentina after the dictatorship. "I am the daughter of democracy," she says, with a slight edge of 18-year-old sarcasm. "That means I have a special responsibility."

That responsibility, as she sees it, is vast—to finally free the country from the economic policies that survived the transition from military to civilian rule. Yet she seems undaunted by the task, or at least unafraid. Gaby, as she is called by friends and family, charges off to demonstrations wearing low-slung cargo pants and her brother's blink-182 knapsack. She holds placards with black-painted fingernails and stares down police lines with eyes dusted in blue sparkles.

Her parents don't share her fearlessness. When the streets of Buenos Aires exploded in 2001, the modest Mitidieri home experienced an explosion of its own. The conflict was over whether then 17-year-old Gaby would be allowed to join the demonstrations. Gaby was determined to go to the Plaza—"I just couldn't stand to be one of those people who watches the world through a TV screen," she says.

Her father, a survivor of the Dirty War, during which he had been kidnapped and tortured, physically blocked Gaby's way to the door, while she shouted that he, of all people, should understand why she needed to be in the streets. Sergio Mitidieri was unmoved—he had been Gaby's age when he first got involved in student politics, and his youth hadn't saved him or his friends,

many of whom were killed.

Like many in his generation, Mitidieri did not return to political activism after the generals retreated. The terror of those years stayed with him, robbing him of the outspoken confidence of his student days—for years, he told Gaby that the scars on his back and shoulders were from sports injuries. Today, he still doesn't like to talk about the past; he keeps his head down and works hard to support his wife and

four children. Gaby says that her father's fear—that "he lives with idea of death hanging over his head"—means that the dictatorship, whether imposed by external terror or internal fear, is still gripping the country.

"When I first found out about what happened to my father," Gaby says, "I kept asking myself, 'Why did he live? Why did they let him survive?' Then I read 1984, and I realized that he and the others survived to keep the fear alive, and to remind the entire population of the fear. My father is living proof of that."

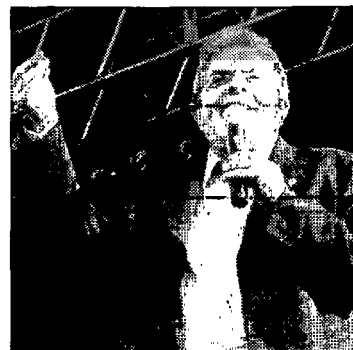
But sitting in the Mitidieri home on the first anniversary of the *Argentinazo*, it struck me that Gaby, the self-proclaimed "daughter of democracy," might be underestimating democracy's contagious power. When she announced on the morning of December 19 that she was joining the anniversary demonstrations, her mother quietly helped her pack her knapsack: water, a cellphone, a lemon (it helps mitigate the effects of tear gas)—she even lent Gaby a headscarf. And Gaby's father watched them pack, looking worried but proud.

That evening, the local neighborhood assembly called everyone to come out of their houses with their pots and pans to celebrate the day, one year earlier, when something happened to change Argentina (though still no one can explain exactly what that was). And a strange thing happened: Gaby's parents showed up. They hung around on the edges of the gathering; they didn't talk to anyone—but they were there.

"We still have fear," Sergio Mitidieri told me, "but we have anger, too. It's better to fight in the streets than to be quiet at home. Gaby taught me that." ■

Naomi Klein is the author of *No Logo* and *Fences and Windows*. A version of this article originally appeared in the *Guardian*. Additional research by Dawn Makinson and Joseph Huff-Hannon.

Another World Is Possible



100,000 people traveled to Brazil for the World Social Forum, where the looming war with Iraq dominated the agenda

by Ben Ehrenreich

PORTO ALEGRE, BRAZIL

If two words could conceivably sum up the mood at the 2003 World Social Forum, they would be urgency and jubilation—urgency as the war in Iraq creeps closer, and jubilation over Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva's victory in the Brazilian elections, which was taken by many as a sign that, for the moment in Latin America at least, the new global left has neoliberalism on the run.

Under the slogan "Another World Is Possible," the forum, an attempt to allow the so-called anti-globalization movement a chance to strategically globalize itself, was held for the third year running in Porto Alegre. The city's name at times seems tongue-in-cheek—the cranes at its riverside port stand idle, its warehouses sufficiently empty that several were used as cavernous seminar rooms for the forum. But downtown—a cluster of smog-stained high-rises of stucco, tile and glass—bustles well into the night, its streets packed with people shopping and hustling to work or working in the streets themselves, hauling bundles of recycled cans or waste paper on horse-drawn carts, hawking batteries and bus tokens, shoeshines and sex.

And from every corner of the globe, progressive intellectuals and activists wearing the red and yellow badges of the World Social Forum helped pack the street corners, wandering in small herds between hotels, cramming into city buses for long, sweaty rides to forum sites distributed on disparate ends of town.

Forum organizers say the event almost doubled in size since last year, with nearly 100,000 people attending—mainly Brazilians, but with more than 1,000 Americans as the second-largest

national contingent and many others from all over Latin America and from every continent save Antarctica. (Interestingly, the American press corps didn't even make it into the top three; much of our mainstream media were apparently too busy covering the rival World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland.)

It's anybody's guess, though, how many people really showed up. The police count was 70,000 at the opening-day rally on January 23, where banners in Japanese, Spanish, English and Arabic shared space with a sea of red flags from Brazil's Workers Party. But most of the time the forum-goers were spread throughout hundreds of halls and seminar-rooms across the city, and much of the forum's real work—informal networking and organizing among activists—took place invisibly in bars, restaurants and hotel rooms. But 100,000 doesn't seem far off, judging by the endless expanse of tents that crowded the "youth camp" in a park along the river and by the length of time it took to walk even a few yards at one of the forum's central locations, the campus of the Pontifical Catholic University (its acronym, PUC, delightfully pronounced "pookee").

The sheer size of this year's forum bred a degree of optimism (and a perhaps greater degree of chaos—complete programs were

Scenes from the World Social Forum (above, left to right): Members of the Brazilian Communist Party march against the FTAA; Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez appears in Porto Alegre; Canadian farmer Percy Schmeiser holds a sign criticizing agribusiness giant Monsanto, which contaminated his fields; Lula fires up the crowd.

ALL PHOTOS GETTY IMAGES

not available until the event's third day) that mated happily with the residual jubilation of Lula's victory. The mere mention of the Brazilian president's name was enough to win any speaker a deafening ovation. Lula's speech at an outdoor amphitheater on January 24, attended by hordes of shirtless youth standing in the sun, chanting, singing and dancing, had more of the energy of a pop concert—Lulapalooza, perhaps—than a political rally.

In past years in Porto Alegre, the forum's tone has been more defensive, the movement's self-image embattled. The first forum was preoccupied with the increasingly militarized response of European and North American governments to street protests. Last year's, despite the shock of the September 11 attacks, took place equally in the shadow of the proposed Free Trade Area of the Americas. This year that threat still loomed, but speaker after speaker referred to "the failure of neoliberalism" and "the end of the illusion of neoliberalism," even neoliberalism's "defeat," as a *fait accompli*.

When the cheers died down though, the grim prospect of war in Iraq was everywhere in evidence. Billboards placed by the Brazilian Communist Party, condemning imperialism and demanding peace, rose above Porto Alegre's highways. A small Iraqi delegation wandered from event to event, waving Iraqi flags and eliciting more puzzlement than applause. Posters of Bush with a Hitlerian mustache were taped to nearly every free wall at the forum and captioned, "Bush out! Iraqi oil belongs to the Iraqis!" Even the facade of a local shopping mall was adorned with a giant blue banner reading, "PAZ."

Within the halls of the WSF, speaker after speaker opened with comments on the urgency of the current crisis. "We meet at a very critical time in history," the London-based Pakistani writer Tariq Ali told a crowded stadium audience. "We are on the eve of a new war."

"I come here with a sense of urgency," announced Medea Benjamin of Global Exchange, before updating the forum on the efforts of the American peace movement.

"We're meeting at a moment in world history that is in many ways unique," said Noam Chomsky on the final day of the events. "It is ominous but full of hope."

It is not merely true that another world is possible, said one Argentine delegate, but that "this world is impossible. This world is unfeasible. This world cannot move on."

One, it seems, are the not-so-distant days when the diminishing importance of the nation-state was on most everyone's lips in the global justice movement, when something called "corporate globalization"—as much a European offspring as an American one—appeared to have displaced imperialism as the common enemy of the left.

But the raw arrogance of the Bush administration's foreign policy, its refusal to make even a Clintonian show at diplomatic politesse, has rendered "empire" synonymous with the United States. At the same time, the Bush administration has allowed the global justice movement, within the United States and abroad (as many as 1 million activists marched against the war

in November at the European Social Forum in Italy), to transition fairly smoothly into a worldwide anti-war movement.

"Bush campaigned with a unity-not-divisiveness slogan," said Steve Cobble, an American delegate from Washington's Institute for Policy Studies. "He's clearly united the whole world against our war in Iraq"—and against the United States more generally. References to the United States as a "gangster state" worked as applause lines almost as effectively as the two syllables of the Brazilian president's name.

The most urgent problem was no longer a vast and often invisible tangle of predatory corporations, national governments and compliant international institutions, but the single enemy of American aggression, be it military or economic. "If we are going to fight for a better world, then our struggle cannot be separated from a struggle against the hegemony of the United States of America," said Achin Vanaik, a delegate from India (where, incidentally, next year's forum is scheduled to be held).

"There is not on the one hand social and economic problems, and on the other hand political and military problems," said Egyptian scholar Samir Amin. "One cannot defeat the IMF and the other institutions that obey the United States without defeating the military strategies of the United States. The social struggles against the United States must be articulated at all levels. As long as the aggressive, fascist strategy of the United States is not defeated, an alternative globalization will not be possible."

Through all of this, though, came praise for the American peace movement, and a recognition that change would likely have to start within what Tariq Ali called "the heartland of the empire." "It is extremely important to build the largest possible anti-war movement, including the United States," he said, expressing a sentiment voiced by many. "And one of the things we have to pay tribute to is the 400,000 who marched in Washington in opposition to their own government."

Others, such as Ugandan trade activist Yaspal Tandon, focused more on obligation than accomplishment. Speaking of the hypocrisy of calling oneself democratic while oppressing others abroad, and suggesting a replacement for the neoliberal Washington consensus, Tandon said, "I would propose that part of the Porto Alegre consensus be to ask, to demand of our American brothers and sisters here that they carry with them an enormous responsibility. Above all, we beseech the people of America to democratize their society."

Despite the omnipresent urgency, the anger and alarm, the third World Social Forum ended on a note of almost ecstatic optimism. Indian author Arundhati Roy delivered the closing oration to a crowd of thousands packing every last corner of Porto Alegre's Gigantinho Stadium. After delineating the horrific legacy of neoliberal policies in India—the damage wreaked by privatization and land and labor "reforms," the rise of an ultranationalist elite, the state-approved slaughter of 2,000 Muslims in Gujarat last March—Roy reminded the crowd of its own power. "We are many, and they are few," she said. "They need us more than we need them. Another world is not only possible, she is on her way. And on a quiet day, if you really listen, you can hear her breathing." ■

*"We are meeting at a moment
that is in many ways unique.
It is ominous but full of hope."*

A Maturing Movement



But activists still disagree on the best course to 'another world'

By David Moberg

PORTO ALEGRE, BRAZIL

If the mood of nearly 100,000 global justice advocates who gathered for the third World Social Forum is a good indicator, the prospects for their campaign against the way the world's economy is now run are as sunny as this summery "happy port."

Even as the threat of war in Iraq preoccupied delegates from 126 countries, and created a new focus on the United States as the single dominating power in the world, this optimism was a striking contrast to the doom and gloom reported from Davos, Switzerland, where business and political elites met in the opposing camp of the World Economic Forum.

In Porto Alegre, there was a prevailing sense that the "Washington consensus"—deregulated markets, free capital flows, privatization of public services, privileges for multinational corporations, and economic austerity—had little popular legitimacy and declining official support. Even the international financial institutions have been forced to give the appearance of putting social issues, like reducing poverty and debt, at the center of their agendas. "The Washington consensus and neoliberalism have been defeated," proclaimed Jose Dirceu, chief of staff for Brazil's new president, Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva.

But the global justice movement is still divided on the policies for "another world" and the strategies to get there. The divisions are between North and South—that is, countries at different levels of income and economic development. But they are also found among movements within countries at each level.

The most fundamental conflict is between totally rejecting "globalization" or trying to make global economic relations more just. Calls to abolish the IMF still motivate street protests. But many are now more interested in defining a new model of globalization. A recent survey of 15 countries conducted by Environics, a Canadian firm, found that despite positive general sentiments about growing global linkages, clear majorities in most countries say that globalization is driven by the interests of big corporations, that globalization concentrates wealth rather than extending opportunities to all, and that "global society" should concentrate on social issues before economic growth.

At one debate in Porto Alegre, Mark Weisbrot, co-director of the Washington-based Center for Economic and Policy Research, and Yashpal Tandon of Socrine, a Ugandan NGO, both argued for withdrawing from the international economy to either nationally or regionally based economic development strategies. On the other side, Eveline Herfkens of the U.N. Campaign for the Millennium Development Goals argued that protests and criticism are changing international institutions. Still, she acknowledged global "deficits" in the areas of adequate economic regulation, democracy and coherence among inter-

No doom and gloom here (above, left to right): Mark Weisbrot of the Center for Economic and Policy Research; thousands gather in the "happy port"; Susan George, vice president of ATTAC.

national institutions. (The World Trade Organization and World Health Organization pursue conflicting policies on AIDS treatment, for example).

Brazil's Dirceu outlined a strategy that was both national and global, reflecting his role as a chief strategist in a new government which must balance the demands of its populist base with the need to avoid provoking retaliation from international financial markets and the U.S. government. "I can see no way that we can ignore the fact that we must take on national development" and use national industrial policy to create jobs, he said. "But I do not think you can delink from the world economic project. It is dangerous."

While social movements in Latin America denounce the proposed Free Trade Area of the Americas, as Lula himself once did, his government now expresses willingness to negotiate an FTAA. But Lula's version would be much different from the one the Bush administration is pushing, and would require Latin America to agree first on its own priorities before negotiating with the United States.

"Protests at meetings don't stop institutions. We need binding laws."

While groups from both North and South worry about the disruptive forces of corporate globalization, their perspectives often diverge. Looking at China, for example, Martin Khor of the Malaysian-based Third World Network is concerned that China's entry into the WTO will force 100 million Chinese peasants from the land as cheap, subsidized grains flood the market.

On the other hand, Bill Brett of the International Labor Organization worries that all the jobs will go to China when global garment quotas expire under WTO rules next year. "The danger is that everything moves to China," he says, "where no trade union standards are honored and the right to strike is trampled. How do you make it fair when American capitalism and Chinese communism form an irresistible combination for commandeered labor?"

Trade issues often risk pitting potential global justice allies against each other. Brazilian metal workers were unhappy when Bush imposed, union-backed tariffs on steel imports last year. But Brazilian and U.S. steel union leaders met in Porto Alegre to talk about common campaigns on issues like debt relief and fighting anti-union multinational corporations. "We made the decision to look beyond these problems and try to find things we could work on in common," said United Steelworkers global representative Doug Niehouse.

Fernando Lopes, soon to be president of the 900,000-member Brazilian metalworkers union, explained that after visiting the United States, "We know more about what happened in the United States, more about the real problems in the United States and the real position of steelworkers in America. Also, we now have more power with our own boss," who had tried to blame unrelated job cuts on the tariffs.

Many parts of the global justice movement want to restrict global rule-making, especially NAFTA provisions permitting corporations to sue governments to change domestic laws, or WTO expansion of marketplace domination to public services. The lat-

ter would turn water into a commodity and undermine everything from prisons to education. The global labor movement continues to campaign for labor rights and environmental protection in the WTO. And groups including the French-originated international organization ATTAC want to increase international regulation of tax havens and financial speculation, including imposition of a tiny "Tobin" tax on global currency trading.

Yet "The World Is Not For Sale" coalition is not building its campaign to "shrink or sink" the WTO at next September's Cancun, Mexico, ministerial meeting by mounting massive protests that risk brutal repression. Instead, the coalition plans to ratchet up political pressure domestically on individual governments.

There is a growing recognition, partly inspired by Lula's victory, that the movement must move beyond protest to politics.

Whatever the long-term goal, eventually the question comes down to who's in power in national states. Global markets and corporations may be overwhelming many governments, but governments also have unnecessarily given away their powers. "We can't change or abolish the WTO, IMF or World Bank except through governments," argued Susan George, vice president of ATTAC.

"Protests at meetings don't stop institutions. We need binding laws, and we can only get them through governments."

Lula provides a model for other countries. Brought to the presidency by the Workers Party, itself formed through decades of rigorously grassroots, politically inclusive and democratic organizing, Lula now faces great expectations at home. His allies expect him to reform labor laws to strengthen an already vibrant union movement. Much as they support him, union leaders and other social activists intend to keep mobilizing their supporters and pressuring Lula to deliver on his promises to end hunger and expand the domestic market by redistributing income.

At the same time, the new president is burdened with a high-interest, rapidly growing, ultimately unsustainable foreign debt that more than doubled under his predecessor. Lula is trying to tackle global pressures on Brazil and assert more control over the national economy with other measures, such as reform of the tax system.

The *New York Times* recently reported that the Workers Party lost the governor's race last fall in the state of Rio Grande do Sul partly because it refused to give \$37 million in public subsidies to Ford to build a new plant in the state. Ford instead built the plant with subsidies in lower-wage Bahia. Now Lula intends to reform tax laws to eliminate such competition between states for multinational investment. Like nearly every new government initiative in Brazil, this will be developed through wide-ranging discussions involving business, labor, NGOs and politicians, with the new governor of Rio Grande do Sul, ironically enough, as head of the commission.

No unified strategy emerged from Porto Alegre. But along with a shared sense of hope, the faint outline appeared of a maturing movement that strives to expand protest to encompass politics more broadly, to define alternatives for both nations and regions to assert more autonomy, and to create new global institutions that would regulate the world economy with greater justice. ■

SEEDS OF DOMINATION

Don't want GMOs
in your food?
It may already be too late.

By Karen Charman

Americans have been eating genetically engineered foods every day for several years, though many remain unaware of that basic fact. Consequently, the question of whether our food should be manipulated with genes from foreign species may already be moot.

Walter Fehr is an agronomist and director of the Office of Biotechnology at Iowa State University. He says genetically engineered varieties of staple crops like corn and soybeans have contaminated seed stocks all the way to the "breeder seed," the purest version of a crop variety. If breeder seed contains material from genetically modified organisms, or GMOs, all the seeds and plants that descend from that stock will contain GMOs as well. According to Fehr, transgenic contamination of breeder and other seed stocks "happens routinely."

That shocks Theresa Podoll, executive director of the Northern Plains Sustainable Agriculture Society (NPSAS), an organization that represents 350 organic farmers throughout the Upper Midwest and Canada. Podoll is intimately familiar with the problems GMOs are causing organic farmers, but she is astounded to hear somebody within the biotech establishment admit that transgenic contamination goes all the way to breeder seed.

Podoll points out that the nation's agricultural universities, the so-called land-grant institutions, are charged with safeguarding the public seed stocks. "If research with transgenic crops at land-grant facilities makes contamination of the seed stocks a forgone conclusion, why are they doing transgenic

research?" she asks. "To gamble all our crops' genetic resources to do research on a questionable technology that is in its infancy is unconscionable."

Genetically engineered crops were first commercially planted just seven years ago. Ninety-nine percent of the world's estimated 145 million acres of genetically modified crops are planted in four countries: Argentina, Canada, China and the United States. Four crops—canola, corn, cotton and soybeans—that are altered to tolerate herbicides or produce pesticides make up most of these plantings.

From the beginning, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration deemed biotech food "substantially equivalent—that is, no different from food produced by conventional breeding methods, which can only occur between members of the same or closely related species. This classification does not require long-term food-safety testing. Such tests have never been done on GMO crops.

However, in order to breach the natural barriers between species and make foreign genes function in their new homes, bioengineers use genes from viruses and bacteria, as well as genes resistant to antibiotics needed to treat human diseases. The public health implications of this genetic manipulation are unknown. The technology also raises concerns about the creation of toxic substances and allergens that have never been part of the human diet. For these reasons, the British Medical Association and other scientists have called for a worldwide moratorium on GMO crops until safety questions are answered.



Fehr's conclusions are not based on comprehensive research documenting the extent of transgenic contamination in the public seed stocks held by Iowa State or other public agricultural institutions, though such an effort is now underway at his university. However, the problem of GMO contamination became "obvious," he says, when Europe raised concerns about receiving bioengineered soybeans and corn after the first commercial harvest of transgenic crops in 1996. "From that point on, the whole issue of contamination has been at the forefront of our thinking."

Fehr is not the only one who acknowledges the transgenic contamination of seed stocks. The Grain Quality Task Force at Purdue University also notes that "whenever new genetic material is introduced into the agricultural crop mix, trace contamination of non-target crops is unavoidable."

That's because wind and insects carry genetically engineered pollen far and wide. According to Kendall Lamkey, a corn breeder at Iowa State, the traits of GMO crops are dominant because there is nothing in a non-transgenic receptor plant's genome to counter the introduced foreign genes.

Contamination also occurs when GMO seeds fall into non-transgenic fields from farm equipment previously used on a gene-altered crop. Researchers are not required to use separate equipment for GMO varieties that are already commercialized; and because of the cost and trouble of keeping them separate from everything else, Fehr says, they don't. "If you're growing both GMO and non-GMO and running them through the same equipment and cleaning facilities," he says, "you can be assured that there's going to be contamination."

For years, Podell and her organization have been raising concerns about contamination from transgenic research plots at North Dakota State University, their local land-grant institution. In 2001, NPSAS learned that a research plot of wheat engineered to resist Roundup, Monsanto's best-selling herbicide, had been planted at North Dakota State next to the foundation seed stocks for Coteau wheat, which is popular among organic growers.

Foundation seed stocks, which are grown directly from breeder seed, form the genetic basis for any given crop variety. They are "the seed for the seed" that farmers buy and plant. Genetically modified wheat—like Monsanto's "Roundup Ready"—is not approved for human consumption, yet North Dakota State told the NPSAS via e-mail that "there can be no guarantee that GMO DNA has not been introduced" into any wheat varieties grown at its research stations.

Last March, the NPSAS delivered a petition with more than 1,600 signatures from farmers and consumers to North Dakota State officials, demanding that transgenic crops not be planted or handled where conventional seeds were bred, grown, cleaned or stored. The petition also went to three other land-grant institutions: South Dakota State University, the University of Minnesota and Montana State University.

In May, Fred Cholick, dean of the College of Agriculture and Biological Sciences at South Dakota State, acknowledged the problem and told NPSAS that protocols were in place to prevent transgenic contamination. The protocols include testing to make sure seed stocks and conventional varieties are GMO-free. However, Cholick also said more than 80 percent of his univer-

sity's soybean varieties were already transgenic. He ended his letter with this disclaimer: "As a biologist, I also realize that genetic systems are not perfect."

Minnesota and Montana State officials say they understand the need to keep seed varieties pure and are following procedures to do so. But they didn't spell what steps they were taking, nor did they agree to NPSAS's demand to halt work on genetically engineered crops in facilities that also contain foundation seed stocks.

North Dakota State, however, did agree last year to use separate, designated equipment for harvesting transgenic research plots. While this is a positive step, it only applies to crop varieties not yet approved for commercial release. Dale Williams, who's in charge of seed stocks at the university, defends the protocols and says that even if foundation seed stocks are contaminated by GMOs, "it's not that much of a problem."

The university's foundation seed stocks are now routinely tested for GMOs, and so far none have turned up in any of the samples. But relying on tests from seed samples is not foolproof. John Lukach, a research manager at the university, points out that to be absolutely sure GMOs aren't present, every single seed would need to be tested. Further, some commonly used testing methods can only detect GMOs at a contamination level of about 10 percent.

If transgenes are detected, Williams says, North Dakota State could produce new foundation stocks from breeder seed (assum-

ing it isn't already contaminated) or take, say, 100 randomly selected seed samples from the foundation plots, test them, and, if they are free of GMOs, use that seed to produce another foundation crop. Kendall Lamkey, the corn breeder from Iowa State, says either of those strategies could work, but he doubts either would be employed for contamination with GMOs that are already approved—like Roundup Ready soybeans.

In fact, last autumn two lots of North Dakota State foundation seed stocks for Natto soybeans, a non-GMO variety, were found to be contaminated with Roundup Ready genes. Williams says the contamination occurred in the winter of 2000 when the seeds were sent down to Chile. (In the winter, breeder seed and foundation seed stocks are typically sent to nurseries in warmer climates.) The contamination wasn't discovered until after the seed was brought back and grown out at a North Dakota State seed farm—and then not until after some of the seed had been distributed to growers of registered and certified seed, who sell to organic and other farmers.

Theresa Podoll says that the university had promised that any foundation seed stocks found to be contaminated with GMOs would be destroyed. But in November, Williams told North Dakota's *Grand Forks Herald* that since Roundup Ready soybeans are "not-regulated"—that is, they are approved for human consumption—"small amounts of it, or tolerances of amounts, are allowed in most markets."

Down on the Biopharm

The GMO contamination issue is about to get a lot more dangerous with the introduction of transgenic crops that produce pharmaceutical and industrial compounds. Some of the products being tested include a protein for an experimental AIDS vaccine, herpes treatment, contraceptives and cancer drugs. Since 1987, more than 300 field trials of such crops have taken place in the open environment, most over the past three years. Corn, which is wind-pollinated and therefore spreads its traits easily, is the crop of choice for biopharming.

While land-grant universities are working with pharma crops on their premises, it's difficult to know exactly what they are doing. Biotech companies also contract with individual farmers to grow pharma crops. To grow the plants in the open environment, farmers must have permits issued by the USDA's Animal Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS). But the USDA won't reveal the exact location of biopharming test plots or, in most cases, what organisms the plants are engineered to produce. This information is considered "confidential business information."

Environmental Engineers Food Action Coalition and environmental and consumer groups have filed a petition with a report by

Friends of the Earth policy analyst Bill Praese outlining the risks that biopharming poses to consumers, farmers, food manufacturers and the environment: transgenic contamination of food crops and the potential for dangerous health consequences like allergic reactions or the creation of toxic substances in the food (see list).

Last autumn, the issue came to a head when food manufacturers made public their concerns about food crops being used for biopharming. In response, the Biotechnology Industry Organization (BIO), a trade association and lobbying group, put out a short-lived voluntary policy announcing that their members would not be permitted to grow pharma crops in the heart of the corn belt. But after pressure from Iowa politicians complaining that their state should not be excluded from the opportunity to take part in a potentially huge economic bonanza, BIO rescinded its policy.

In November, federal regulators announced that the Texas-based company ProdiGene had contaminated 500,000 bushels of soybeans destined for the food supply with pharmaceutical corn the company had grown in the same field the previous year. The contamination occurred when corn plants sprouted from seed left in the field. Although APHIS inspectors saw

the corn plants and told the farmer to remove them before the soybean field was harvested, that didn't happen.

The pharma corn was harvested along with the soybeans and sent to a grain elevator in Aurora, Nebraska, where it was mixed in with 500,000 bushels. ProdiGene was fined \$250,000 and had to assume liability for the \$3 million worth of soybeans that had to be destroyed. Two months earlier, ProdiGene had to burn 155 acres of a neighbor's corn crop in Iowa because of suspected contamination of that corn from pollen from the company's pharma corn.

In September, the Food and Drug Administration issued draft guidelines advising biotech companies what to include in their pharma crop permit applications. Although FDA "strongly recommends" that biotech companies have tests available that can detect the presence of a pharma crop transgene in the raw food crop, the agency doesn't require it. Without those tests, it may be difficult, if not impossible, to catch biopharm contamination of food or feed crops.

"This technology moves so fast," says Theresa Podoll of the Northern Plains Sustainable Agriculture Society, "it's almost impossible to keep up with it."

But GMOs are not allowed in organic food. The widespread transgenic contamination of organic crops threatens the very existence of organic grain producers throughout the Midwest, a situation that speaks volumes about mainstream agriculture's deep-seated bias against non-industrial farming systems. In *The Last Harvest*, Paul Raeburn writes that for decades, organic farming was "dismissed as the work of zealots," and that USDA scientists—many of whom are stationed at land grant universities—historically looked upon organic production systems as "gardening" and "irrelevant to modern agriculture."

By contrast, industrial agriculture has enjoyed enormous benefits. These included the close working relationships between the land-grant universities and agribusiness corporations like Monsanto, massive public subsidies for commodity crops, and weak environmental and public health laws that permit widespread pollution of air, water, soil and food with chemicals and fertilizers used in industrial agriculture.

Despite the uneven playing field, the success of organic farming has made it impossible to ignore. With consistent growth in retail sales of 20 percent a year since 1990, organics are the fastest-growing sector in the food industry. When given a choice, increasing numbers of people show with their purchases that they want their food produced in an environmentally friendly manner. Food manufacturers have taken notice, and large conglomerates now own the major organic food companies.

Still, GMO contamination is reaching crisis portions in the organic-farming community. "Organic producers can no longer produce organic corn," says NPSAS president Janet Jacobson, an organic farmer in North Dakota's northeast corner. "I don't know any organic farmers that can grow canola, because there's so much GMO canola around. There are also organic farmers who have had soybeans rejected because they were contaminated with GMOs."

Transgenic contamination is now so rampant that the FDA prohibits organic food manufacturers from labeling their products "GMO-free."

In Canada, a group called the Saskatchewan Organic Directorate (SOD) last year filed a lawsuit on behalf of all certified organic producers in the province, seeking millions of dollars in damages from Monsanto and Aventis, another biotech corporation (which was recently purchased by Bayer), for the loss of the organic canola market due to GMO contamination. Canola is pollinated by insects, and SOD claims the companies knew, or ought to have known, when they introduced bioengi-

neered canola that it would spread and contaminate the environment and neighboring farmers' fields. SOD is also seeking an injunction against the introduction of transgenic wheat.

Unlike conventional agriculture, which relies on chemical pesticides and synthetic fertilizers to be able to produce one or two crops year after year, organic agriculture can only work by growing a diversity of crops in rotation around the farm. Crop rotations enable organic farmers to control pests and weeds and manage diseases, while also building soil fertility. With corn, soybeans and canola already gone from organic crop rotations on the northern plains, SOD President Arnold Taylor says the loss of wheat would be catastrophic. The introduction of GMO wheat would likely spell the end of organic farming on the northern prairie.

Organic farmers aren't the only ones who have suffered from the introduction of biotech crops. Consumers overseas, particularly in Europe, have emphatically rejected GMOs. Dan MacGuire, a policy analyst with the American Corn Growers Association, says economic analysis of USDA data reveals that the introduction of biotech corn is directly responsible for a roughly 30 cent per bushel drop in corn prices. With returns to farmers at their lowest level in decades, and well below the cost of production, he says farmers cannot afford this further cut.

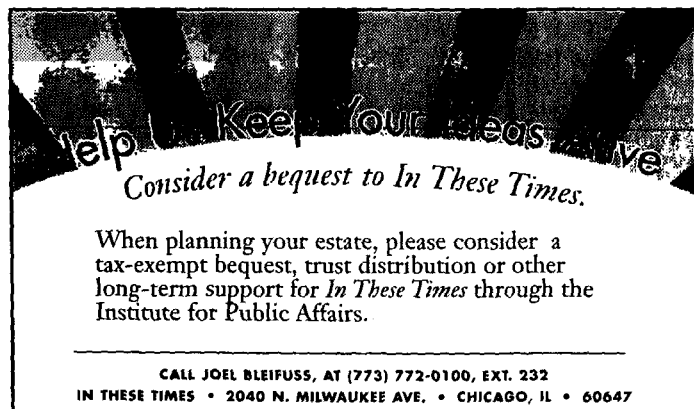
Conventional farmers and the folks who distribute commodity corn already incurred huge losses because StarLink corn, a biotech variety not approved for human consumption, found its way into more than 300 food products—including Taco Bell taco shells—in 2000 and 2001. The StarLink incident prompted expensive recalls and a massive legal quagmire that will take years to resolve. StarLink contamination is still an issue; in December, Japanese officials detected it in a shipment from the United States.

Rejection of GMOs in foreign markets and the contamination debacle have made transgenic wheat the subject of raging debate and political infighting in North Dakota. Wheat is North Dakota's No. 1 industry, indirectly generating some \$4 billion a year. Half of the crop is exported, and buyers in eight of its 11 main export markets have said they don't want transgenic wheat. Many have warned that they'll go elsewhere if GMO wheat is planted because of the likelihood of transgenic contamination. As a result, most farming organizations in North Dakota have called for a moratorium on the commercial release of Roundup Ready wheat until there are assurances that export markets won't evaporate. So far, powerful Republicans in the state Senate have blocked such a measure.

Some supporters have indicated that the biotech industry may be deliberately contaminating the food supply with GMOs so that alternatives to bioengineered food no longer exist. In January 2001, food industry consultant Don Westfall told the *Toronto Star*: "The hope of the industry is that over time the market is so flooded that there's nothing you can do about it. You just sort of surrender."

Last April, Dale Adolphe, executive director of the Canadian Seed Growers Association, told Canadian canola growers at their annual meeting that despite growing public opposition and new regulations, the increasing acreage of bioengineered crops may eventually end the debate. Adolphe told *The Western Producer*, a Canadian agricultural paper, "It's a hell of a thing to say that the way we win is don't give the consumer a choice, but that might be it."

Perhaps the biotech industry has already won. ■



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Out of the Darkness

By Brian Cook

In 1905, Leo Tolstoy wrote a scathing letter to the *Times* newspaper of London, attacking governments in general and the Czar in particular, describing him as a "weak-minded Hussar

The Cave
By José Saramago
Harcourt
307 pages, \$25

officer, standing below the intellectual level of most his subjects, grossly superstitious and of coarse tastes." The pundits of the English press grew indignant at this act of *lèse-majesté* and a smear campaign erupted, with one journalist deriding the author of *War and Peace* for his inability to understand the intricacies of war.

Viewing these happenings from Trieste, Italy, a young James Joyce could not believe his eyes. Normally slow to anger, Joyce scribbled an apoplectic letter to his brother, writing, "Do they think the author of *Resurrection* and *Anna Karénin* is a fool? Does this impudent, dishonourable journalist think he is the equal of Tolstoy, physically, intellectually, artistically, or morally? The thing is absurd. ... Perhaps that journalist will undertake to revise Tolstoy more fully—novels, stories, plays and all."

Consider this anecdote a disclaimer. Those hoping for a combative critical appraisal of José Saramago's newest work, *The Cave*, will have to look elsewhere. At age 81, with a Nobel Prize under his belt, Saramago has spent a lifetime working at his craft, honing it to keen perfection. The dark, nebulous forces and impossible logic of his dream-like novels have led many to compare him with Kafka, but in the generosity he lends to his creations, in both their descriptions and actions, he shares certain affinities with the aforementioned Russian prince of letters. Showing no signs of senility, only

stoic, hard-won wisdom, *The Cave* is a work of a master.

Cipriano Algor, a widowed 64-year-old potter, lives in a small village, firing his earthenware plates and water jugs in the archaic kiln built by his grandfather. We first meet him making the hour-long journey to the contracted buyer of his wares, "The Center," a vast, ever growing complex of shops, amusement parks and apartments located in the heart of an unnamed city. Upon arrival, however, Cipriano is met by the "assistant head of department in charge of reception" who curtly informs him that the Center will take only half of his pottery and from hereon purchase no more. The reason? Sales are down because of "the launch of some imitation plastic crockery, it's so good it looks like the real thing, with the added advantage it's much lighter and cheaper."

His life's labor and meaning reduced to nothing, Cipriano returns home, dejected and depressed. Further compounding his misery, his son-in-law Marçal, who works at the Center as a security guard, soon expects a promotion to "resident guard," meaning the family would have to leave the home of their ancestors and move permanently to the Center. Though obstinate in his refusal to relocate, Cipriano,

At age 81, with a Nobel Prize under his belt, José Saramago has spent a lifetime honing his literary craft to keen perfection.

without any means to provide for himself, has little choice. There is no alternative.

A possible reprieve arrives when his loving daughter Marta suggests Cipriano try his hand at a different form of pottery: clay figurines. The two scour an encyclopedia for inspiration and settle on six human types: a clown, a jester, a nurse, a mandarin, an Eskimo and "a bearded Assyrian." To their surprise, the Center accepts their proposal and places a gigantic order. Racing against time, Cipriano goes to work, aided by Marta, Marçal and the stray dog taken into their household, who is named Found.

The setup is vintage Saramago: an ultra-contemporary parable, pitting flawed but noble characters against the blank, unfeeling face of modernity. But if the tale itself seems simple and straightforward, it's told in a style rich in complexity, humor and depth. Saramago takes his time, drawing out his characters and surroundings in slow, patient circles.

Cervantes, his fellow Iberian ancestor, doled out "infinite drubbings" to his creations; Saramago, more gently, offers infinite digressions. His discursive sentences begin, then wander playfully, searching under a rock for an insight or chasing a firefly to some understanding, before finally tying



CHRISTOPHER ZIMMER

up, always neatly, his original point. The lover of commas will find them in abundance here.

Such abundance, in all its manifestations, permeates Saramago's fiction. He can fashion lists as lengthy as Rabelais—and does so twice in *The Cave*, with great comic brio—but something more profound is at work here. He has stated that his novels aim to demonstrate “the possibility of the impossible.” *The Cave* untangles this paradox through its dogged insistence on an ancient, if seldom realized, human quality: generosity.

Generosity not only informs the characters' actions toward one another, but through Saramago's descriptive powers, it penetrates their very being. It extends to the narrator, who seems capable of omniscience but at times holds back, allowing the characters to keep their thoughts secret. Best of all, it is all-inclusive, so that even the dog Found is etched with a remarkable depth of feeling and perception. Against charges of sentimentality, it must be stated such generosity never seems faked or forced; rather, it functions as a reminder of Nabokov's belief “that people who denounce the sentimental are generally unaware of what sentiment is.”

Of course, Saramago is no woolly optimist. For always in the background, a stern contrast to the gentle world of the Algor clan, the Center looms. Saramago's least nuanced creation, the Center's billboards scream with jovial menace: “WE WOULD SELL YOU EVERYTHING YOU NEED, BUT WE WOULD PREFER YOU NEED EVERYTHING WE SELL.” But Saramago's lack of subtlety can only be matched by the bumbling tact of global capitalist expansion. With real-life adherents of the market proclaiming its “immortality,” it is simply artistic verisimilitude when one of the Center's executives tells Cipriano, “the Center writes straight on crooked lines and what it takes with one hand, it gives with the other.”

Worse than delusions of divine grandeur, however, are the consequences such hubris entails. Explaining Found's perception of the outside world, Saramago, echoing Giordano Bruno's *monas monadum*, or “unity of unities,” writes that he finds himself in “a whole made up of parts in which each individual is, simultaneously, both one of the parts and the whole of which he is a

part.” Later on, Cipriano notes that the Center's existence, ever enlarging, ever consuming, seems to run against this fundamental principle, appearing “bigger than the city, which means the part is bigger than the whole.” The implications are obvious. In an ironic refinement of Yeats, the Center will hold, but so firmly as to crush everything around it and thus, by definition, itself.

All logical predictions lead to this conclusion; we know it, indeed can feel it, in both mind and bone. But, as the novel's titular reference hints, we find ourselves in a world very much like the cave described by Socrates as told to Plato—bound firmly,

convinced that the puppet forms parading across our flickering television screens accurately represent reality.

For the first 275 pages, these parallels are established, but hang only loose and tenuous. In the finale, however, with a metaphysical sleight of hand, Saramago draws the two threads together seamlessly, creating an effect as immediate as it is terrifying. That night, sleepless, you roll in bed and two realizations slowly dawn: *The Cave*, if only briefly, has led you out of the darkness. And that fierce, frightening light you now face is an uncertain future, blazed bright by the sun of Saramago. ■

Headphone Mind

By Joshua Rothkopf

Morvern Callar gets at you through your eardrums. Its gifted young director, Lynne Ramsay, has described her second feature as a “headtrip,” and, for better or worse, the term sticks.

There's great, trippy artistry at work here, particularly from sound designer Paul Davies and his mixer Tim Alban, carving intimate spaces from the quiet

she lifts the phone but hesitates. Gifts are unwrapped with a roar of shredded paper: a crisp leather jacket, a lighter that snaps like a whip. Morvern plunges into a bath, does her eyes up like a raccoon. Finally: the crinkle of bills lifted from her dead boyfriend's pocket (“Sorry,” she mumbles), and the gunshots of her platform heels echoing down the stairs to the evening's pills and thrills.

If I'm making this all sound excruciatingly hip, à la the Bride of Tarantino, then I'm doing the film a disservice. *Morvern Callar* isn't just cool, it's downright arctic: Ramsay takes her alienation neat with rarely a chaser of glam. Like *Pulp Fiction*, her movie has a faintly self-congratulatory soundtrack of fringy refinement, sure to send the Stereolab club into E-phoria. But since most of it is heard through Morvern's headphones (sometimes just as

Morvern Callar
Directed by Lynne Ramsay

tones of empty rooms and bass-heavy rave rumblings alike. Wafting through all tomorrow's parties is the title character, a Glasgow girl of the heavily eyelined brood (Samantha Morton)—and it should be said that most headtrip movies do have a certain inclination toward vacancy, even when it's wrought with such subtlety.

Movies don't have to be about much to work, though, and from Ramsay's heightened sonic ambience a slender but arresting narrative begins to insinuate itself. (Alan Warner's cult novel, smartly adapted by the Scottish director with Liana Dognini, would seem to require such sensorial nourishment in order to translate, as did *Trainspotting*.) Under the buzzing glow of a Christmas tree, Morvern is first revealed laying quietly next to the corpse of her boyfriend, a suicide. A computer monitor hums, displaying his final note. The dial tone coos as

Morvern's boyfriend commits suicide. So she chops up his body, steals his novel and takes off for Spain.

a tinny squawk), almost all the selections work wonderfully as spiky reflections of her cryptic thoughts. Call it the difference between Tarantino's rocketing surf guitars

and the musicbox lull of Aphex Twin. Morvern goes into the Morvern Zone a lot, tapping her toes on the coffee table, sipping on a cigarette, plugged into her private reverie. Ramsay is happy to let her go there; as a conductor of mood and

absence? Cagily, Morton never settles for one or the other, and her glossy-eyed indecisiveness makes for something unexpectedly magnetic.

Much of this should be attributed to Ramsay, who seems to know exactly

sublime pastime for dreamers: *Morvern Callar* blooms from slate-gray skies into sangria sunsets and possibilities, limited only by the improvisations of a modern young woman on the run, which is to say, not at all. The girls run into bars wearing goofy scuba masks; they run circles around the randy boys hitting on them at the hotel; they run down to the beach hoisting bottles of champagne—they're always running.

Still, Ramsay is careful to preserve Morvern's detachment by picking out sad little details: a drugged-up raver pressing her smudged face against a bathroom wall; or Morvern moving through a crowded danceclub pounding with noise, the strobes isolating her in snapshots of aloofness. (During this section, the script rings its one false note: Morvern shares a wild night of sex with another griever, perhaps attractive to her because of his loss, and it's a simplification far too obvious for Morton's nuanced impassiveness.)

Eventually, Morvern and Lanna fling themselves into the surreal Spanish desert—a bickering pair of extremely pale women in the sun. They go separate ways, but just as it seems the vacation is about to unravel, Ramsay uncorks her wittiest development, making Morvern's trip a permanent one. "Such a distinctive female voice," crows the publisher flown out from London, hot for her signature. It's a big laugh because he couldn't be more fooled. Or could he? Morton's impression burns so deeply that you wonder if Ramsay might have just proven him right. Is the world ready for authors like Morvern Callar? It better be. (Her hefty advance will go a long way toward writing lessons.)

But she'll have to go it alone; like last year's *Y Tu Mamá También* and most coming-of-age stories, *Morvern Callar* ends with the bittersweet trade-off of carefree companionship for lonelier sense of purpose. Ramsay, having at last redeemed her headtrip movie, still can't resist one final dive inside, to the softly arpeggiating guitar and aching voice of Mama Cass: "While I'm far away from you, my baby..." We're sucked back into Morvern's head for the last time, but I wasn't able to get this movie out of mine for days. ■

Joshua Rothkopf can be reached at rothkopf@inthesetimes.com.



Morvern Callar (Samantha Morton, center) needs a break.

tone, she's so in control here that you just might miss that spurt of blood in the bathtub—Morvern's messy disposal of her boyfriend. Yes, it's a breakup story.

In a more ideal universe of statuette bestowal—one that wouldn't forget to honor the most fearless of actors such as Jennifer Jason Leigh—Samantha Morton would be the princess waiting in the wings. Her Morvern is transfixing work, both frighteningly opaque and open like a wound, a breakthrough as intense as DeNiro's in *Taxi Driver*. Morton has wowed us before: loose-limbed and hotwired in *Jesus' Son*; outshining millions of dollars of special effects in *Minority Report* with just a shaved head and a haunted eye to "precrime." But she's never had the opportunity to go this deep. Morvern is a character built on expert denial; she allows her friends to believe that her lover has merely left her, that he's "gone to another country."

But Morton plays the lie like she needs to believe it even more than they do—it's key to her dawning sense of liberty. (In many ways, that body lying under the tree is her real present.) Is her detachment a kind of thoughtful grieving, or its

how close to hover, precisely how sharp to focus, just how far to press Morton's intuitiveness until it hits its peak transparency. (Her first feature, the relentlessly bleak *Ratcatcher*, was the announcement of a major talent and the most commanding debut in a decade.) She uses Morton's face as an icon, and seems to have inspired the same openness in new comer Kathleen McDermott, a real discovery, playing Morvern's best friend, Lanna.

A flirt and party girl given to explosive shrieks and giggles, Lanna is almost the exact opposite of Morvern, yet there's a sweet plausibility to their closeness. When Morvern surprises her at work with the news that she's booked them a holiday in Spain (after draining her dead boyfriend's checking account and sending off his unpublished novel to a bookhouse under her own name for good measure), Lanna looks like she's about to jump off the planet with joy. They go back to the apartment and bake cookies, flinging flour in the air like slow-motion ghosts; the boyfriend's Christmas tree looks on, glowering.

What happens next is one of those turns that will always make the movies a

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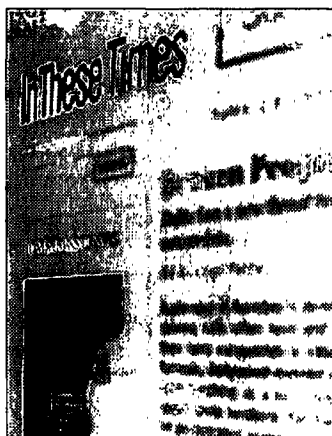
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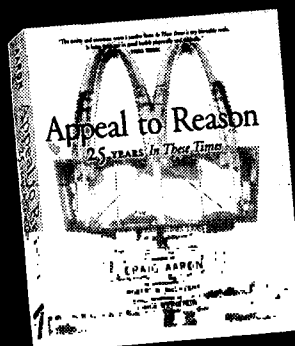
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Continued from back cover

David Alfaro Siqueiros and Diego Rivera to depict the revolution's goals in a new visual language.

Their form of choice? The mural. "It cannot be made a matter of private gain; it cannot be hidden away for the benefit of a certain privileged few," noted Orozco. Minister of Education José Vasconcelos, sympathetic to this vision, gave the artists all the wall space they could use.

This so-called Golden Age of Mexican art in the '20s has since been wrapped in many layers of gauzy romantic radicalism. But in fact, artists and the government frequently disagreed over the meaning of the revolution; the artists of the Syndicate rarely got along with one another, let alone with the workers in whose name they claimed to paint. And despite the rhetoric, not all Mexicans embraced the revolutionary agenda, particularly its attack on the Catholic Church. In July 1924, Orozco and Siqueiros, hard at work on murals for the National Preparatory School in Mexico City, found themselves surrounded by an angry crowd who pelted them with rotten vegetables, beat them and defaced the murals. Golden age indeed.

Within a few years, the new president, Plutarco Calles, began consolidating dictatorial power in a divided country that now included the pro-Catholic Cristero Rebellion and the emerging proto-fascist Gold Shirts. The Syndicate disbanded, and Orozco, now out of a job, went off to New York. The city was then in the midst of a fascination for Mexican life and art that made the shy and physically handicapped Orozco into a minor celebrity of the avant-garde.

In New York, Orozco frequented vaudeville shows and Harlem nightclubs and joined in the discussions of the artists and bohemians who gathered at The Ashram, a salon held in a fashionable Manhattan apartment. Here, Orozco explored Eastern philosophies and comparative mythology, an interest that found its outlet in *Prometheus*. In the mural, the Greek god dominates a fiery landscape; but looking at the suffering mortals below, it's not clear whether Prometheus' gift is the cure or the cause of their anguish.

In the United States, Orozco also fashioned an identity that incorporated both Mexican and American aspects. The first time Orozco crossed the border, at Laredo, Texas, in 1917, his art did not make it with him: A U.S. border guard seized nearly 60 of his drawings as "obscene," in what Orozco later laughed off as "an official showing." In the more metaphorical sense, though, Orozco's work crossed borders easily. One of the most striking images from the *Mexico in Revolution* series was *The Hanged Man* (1926), a stark drawing of a revolutionary execution. The image first appeared as an illustration in *The Underdogs*, a revolutionary novel by Mariano Azuela composed in El Paso, Texas, in 1915. Orozco exhibited the drawing in 1935 in exhibitions protesting lynching in the southern states. If violence respects no borders, he suggested,



José Clemente Orozco, circa 1939.

neither should the culture that protests it.

Orozco's most dramatic vision of a borderless America can be seen in his 1934 murals at Dartmouth College in New Hampshire. Orozco spent nearly two years in residence in Hanover and even helped judge the ice-sculpture contest at the college's winter carnival. (If you can imagine a cross between the films *Reds* and *Animal House*, you'll have some sense of the bizarre incongruity here.)

His masterpiece, *An Epic of American Civilization*, tells the history of the Americas as a single story, from the coming of the god

Quetzalcoatl to the rise of the modern United States. Orozco refused to go along with the myth of the noble savage at a time when Mexican artists were mining Mesoamerican history, and Georgia O'Keeffe was just one of many U.S. artists poking around the Southwest's Indian past. Of this type of exoticism, he remarked, "To lean upon the art of the aborigines, whether it be of antiquity or of the present day, is a sure indication of impotence and of cowardice, in fact, of fraud."

This independence of mind gave Orozco's mural a unique historical vision: One panel denounces the Aztec practice of human sacrifice, but across the hall stands *Modern Human Sacrifice*, a depiction of a ceremonial observance at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. Prometheus' punishment was to have his liver consumed by vultures every day, only to have it grow back; society in Orozco's mural is likewise condemned to repetition.

Orozco left New York in 1934 to return to a Mexico that was once again sympathetic to his politics. In his later murals, fire continued as a central motif. As fascism and war spread across the globe, Orozco's flames were not only destructive, but nearly apocalyptic. The fiery Guadalajara murals of *Man in Flames* (1938) and *Horses of the Apocalypse* (1938) come straight out of hell, offering no hope of redemption. The flames of war sear the walls of his 1940 mural *Dive Bombers*, a commentary on the outbreak of World War II.

In an alternate telling of the Greek myth, Prometheus brings fire to mortals, but he also brings to the curious young Pandora a box filled with the Spites. In 2002, Pandora's Spites (old age, sickness, insanity, the Bush family) once again surround us, and the flames of Orozco's apocalypse look more prescient than his revolutionary fervor. But to see the fire in Orozco's murals as only a destructive force would be to miss the point completely. For despite his accounts of the violence of American life—ancient to modern, on both sides of the border—Orozco remembered the one thing that Prometheus left in the bottom of Pandora's box: the glowing ember of hope. That fire still burns in Orozco's pictures. ■

Christopher Capozzola teaches history at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He wrote about the American painter Ralph Fasanella in the September 2 issue.

The Fires This Time

By Christopher Capazzola

In 1930, the Mexican painter José Clemente Orozco finished his mural *Prometheus* at Pomona College in Southern California. Orozco had by then emerged as one of 20th-century art's most enthusiastic supporters of political revolution—as well as one of its fiercest critics. So it is no surprise that the Greek hero Orozco depicted likewise embodies contradictions. In the ancient myth, Prometheus wraps a glowing ember in a fennel stalk and, against the orders of Zeus, sneaks it out of Mount Olympus to share the secret of fire with humankind.

His gift proved a blessing and a curse; the same flames that warm us can also burn. Orozco knew this all too well. For many years, critics dismissed Orozco's contradictions as the sign of a politically incoherent painter, but a long-overdue reassessment is now underway, one that recognizes in Orozco's vision an important critique of the violence of modern life in the Americas.

That Orozco would become a revolutionary artist was not apparent at the outset. Born in the rural state of Jalisco in 1883, Orozco passed a restless childhood in a family of dull bourgeois strivers who nevertheless indulged his early interest in art. An explosion severely injured the young Orozco; he lost some of his sight, much of his hearing, and his left hand. He later said it turned him into an artist by giving him an outsider's perspective. He enrolled at Mexico City's San Carlos Academy, where he came under the spell of Dr. Atl, a visionary artist and radical who shared with students his passions for Renaissance frescoes, prison reform, and volcanology. Mexico erupted into

revolution in 1910, and by 1915, Orozco had fled Mexico City with Dr. Atl and settled in Veracruz, where he penned caustic caricatures for the radical newspaper *La Vanguardia*.

Such direct political engagement would not last. The series *Mexico in Revolution* demonstrates why Orozco never became an artistic soldier in service of the armies of revolution. Here he drew with the simplest and most understated style the heartbreaking terror of everyday life in Mexico in the 1910s; works like *Requiem* (1928) document the loss of family members. In *The Franciscan and the Indian* (1926), the anti-Catholic Orozco still conveys the immediacy of clerical charity as the body of the friar curves gently over the head of the Indian supplicant. The best works from this period are his drawings of flowering plants that grow thorns so sharp they cut themselves. That is Orozco's vision at its clearest, reminding us that revolutions are wars before they are anything else, and wars leave scars.

Orozco stuck around long enough to find a place within the art world of Mexico's triumphant revolutionary government. Like a generation of Mexican artists, in 1923 Orozco signed up as a member of the Syndicate of Technical Workers, Painters and Sculptors, joining forces with fellow painters

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